

PERSPECTIVES ON TERRORISM

Volume XII, Issue 6
December 2018

A JOURNAL OF THE

TRI **TERRORISM RESEARCH INITIATIVE**
Enhancing Security through Collaborative Research

Welcome from the Guest Editors

This Special Issue on Terrorism from the Extreme Right has been guest-edited by Jacob Aasland Ravndal and Tore Bjørgo, both based at the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo. Last year, we invited a select group of scholars to submit original analyses of key developments in the field of right-wing extremism, violence and terrorism, with a special emphasis on contemporary actors, their modus operandi, and the conditions shaping them. All those who had submitted papers were also invited to a workshop at the University of Oslo on 15-16 February 2018 in order to discuss and revise their original manuscripts. A selection of these manuscripts was then submitted for external peer-review and eventually approved for publication in this Special Issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism*.

Following the 9-11 attacks in 2001, extreme-right terrorism has received far less scholarly and political attention than Islamist terrorism. However, as several of the contributors to this Special Issue make clear, violence committed by extreme right perpetrators represents a very real threat, although it differs considerably from Jihadi terrorism in a number of ways. With a few notable exceptions, political violence from the extreme right tends, in many Western countries, to be more frequent than that from Salafist jihadists. At the same time, right-wing attacks usually result in fewer victims per attack than the ones emanating from jihadi terrorists. However, cumulatively, incidents of extreme right-wing violence add up to large numbers, as in Russia, where 459 people were killed in 406 deadly events between 2000-2017 (Enstad, in this issue).

This Special Issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* explores the modus operandi of extreme right terrorism and violence – investigating *why* but also *how* violent events occur. It is the first Special Issue of an academic journal on terrorism from the extreme right since a 300 pages strong Special Issue on this topic was published in Vol. 7, Issue 1 of *Terrorism and Political Violence* in the Spring of 1995, also guest-edited by Tore Bjørgo. In the meantime, much has happened in terms of conceptual development and improvements in data quality, as well as theory formation. These developments are analysed in more detail in the introductory article to the current Special Issue, where Jacob A. Ravndal and Tore Bjørgo compare the contents of both Special Issues, aiming to bring this research field one step further.

Sincerely,

Jacob A. Ravndal (Postdoctoral Fellow at C-REX)

and

Tore Bjørgo (Director of C-REX and Associate Editor of *Perspectives on Terrorism*)

Note from the Editorial Team

We are pleased to announce the release of Volume XII, Issue 6 (December 2018) of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, available now at: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/PoT>.

Our free and independent online journal is a publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI) and the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) of Leiden University's Campus The Hague. Now completing its twelfth year, *Perspectives on Terrorism* has over 8,100 regular e-mail subscribers and many more occasional

readers and website visitors worldwide. The Articles of its six annual issues are fully peer reviewed by external referees while its Research and Policy Notes, Special Correspondence and other content are subject to internal editorial quality control.

For this Special Issue, the guest-editors were assisted by Alex Schmid and James Forest, the chief editors of *Perspectives on Terrorism* as well as by Christine Boelema Robertus, Associate Editor for IT. Due to the length of this Special Issue, some of the regular features in the Resources section of our journal will have to wait until the next issue, to be published in February 2019. An exception has been made for the Conference Calendar, compiled by Assistant Editor Reinier Bergema which features in this December 2018 issue.

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Investigating Terrorism from the Extreme Right: A Review of Past and Present Research

by Jacob Aasland Ravndal and Tore Bjørgo

Abstract

This introductory article examines how research on terrorism and violence from the extreme right has evolved over the past two decades by comparing the contents of the present Special Issue with those of a previous Special Issue from 1995. This comparative review is divided into three sections: (1) concepts and definitions; (2) data; and (3) theory. Conceptually, the article finds considerable divergence between scholars in the field, and therefore proposes a definition of extreme-right terrorism and extreme-right violence meant to apply across all contexts and actors. Empirically, the article recognizes the inherent challenge of gathering reliable and comparable data on extreme-right violence. At the same time, it finds that considerable advances have been made with regards to generating systematic events data suitable for analysing variation across time and place. The article also outlines some of the most important findings emerging from these new data. Theoretically, the article finds some overlap between the two Special Issues concerning proposed causes of extreme-right terrorism and violence. At the same time, many theories do not speak to each other, or even investigate the same types of outcomes. The article therefore concludes by proposing a conceptual distinction between three distinct types of violent outcomes: (1) violent radicalization, (2) violent events, and (3) aggregate levels of violence. By being more explicit about the types of outcomes one seeks to explain, scholars in this field will hopefully move towards a more unified future research agenda.

Keywords: Extreme right; terrorism; violence; review; state of knowledge; special issue

Introduction

Recent events and media reports have generated a widespread public notion of an emergent terrorist threat from the extreme right in Europe [1] and in the United States.[2] However, the nature of this threat and the conditions shaping it remain poorly documented and understood. For example, we often do not know whether to classify attacks from the extreme right as terrorism, or as less premeditated forms of violence such as racist violence or hate crime. Furthermore, while several theories on terrorism and violence from the extreme right exist, they often do not speak to each other, investigate the same types of outcomes, or even share the same research objectives.

These two observations – a widespread public notion of a growing threat, alongside limited knowledge about the nature and causes of this threat – motivated us to prepare this Special Issue on Terrorism from the Extreme Right. We invited leading experts in the field to submit original analyses of key developments, with a special emphasis on contemporary actors, their *modus operandi*, and the conditions shaping them.

Besides synthesizing the contents of this Special Issue, this introductory article also reviews a previous Special Issue on terrorism from the extreme right, published in 1995 (see Appendix I).[3] We have decided to do so for two reasons. First, we wish to diagnose the state of knowledge in this field by looking at its evolution over the past twenty-three years. What kinds of concepts, data, and theories have been and are being used? In what ways has the field progressed? And what appear currently to be the most promising theoretical avenues?

Second, based on our review of these two Special Issues, we offer some suggestions on how to move forward in order to stimulate a more unified research agenda. Most importantly, we propose a conceptual distinction between three different types of violent outcomes: (1) violent radicalization, (2) violent events, and (3) aggregate levels of violence. Because these outcome types refer to different aspects of violence, they also require somewhat different explanations. However, in existing research on the causes of (extreme-right) terrorism and violence, they are often conflated, and theories about one type may be falsely rejected on the basis that they do

not explain another type. Thus, to avoid confusion and enable more cumulative research, future investigations may benefit from being more explicit about the types of outcome one seeks to explain.

Our review is divided into three sections: (1) concepts and definitions; (2) data; and (3) theory. For each section, we review the contents in the 1995 issue and then compare them with the contents in the 2018 issue. Appendix I gives an overview of the articles in both special issues.

Concepts and Definitions

To move this research field forward, scholars need to agree upon what their object of study is, and how to distinguish it from related phenomena such as hate crime.[4] However, there is limited academic debate on how to conceptualize extreme right terrorism and violence. Some scholars avoid explicit definitions altogether, while others operate with conceptualizations tailored to specific groups, movements, or countries.

These varying practices are reflected by the contributions to the 1995 Special Issue. To create a shared point of departure, the contributors were all asked to relate their analyses to the late Ehud Sprinzak's theory of split delegitimization, which served as a theoretical introduction to that volume.[5] Although Sprinzak never provided an explicit definition of extreme-right terrorism, he did provide two characteristics of extreme-right terrorists: (1) they operate with a double set of enemies: a non-governmental or external threat (e.g. immigrants and communists), and the internal enemy (e.g. the "traitors" in government and the political establishment); and (2) they are "particularistic" in their ideological orientation, as opposed to being oriented by universal values. Although both characteristics may still apply, they are arguably insufficient for including all extreme-right terrorists while excluding all other types.

None of the other contributions to the 1995 Special Issue offer any overarching conceptualizations of extreme-right terrorism or violence either. Some rather conceptualize different subtypes of extreme-right milieu, perpetrators, or violence,[6] while others are more case-oriented and look at specific groups, movements, or countries.[7] In terms of terminology, the concepts used are quite diverse, including "right-wing terrorism", "racist violence", "neo-fascist violence", "radical-right violence" and "far-right violence". Terms such as "extreme", "radical", and "far" right are used interchangeably throughout the volume.

When trying to arrive at a *shared* understanding of our object of inquiry – extreme-right terrorism and violence – it is perhaps the extreme/radical/far right categories that are most challenging to conceptualize in a way that applies across all contexts and actors. Back in 1995, an academic consensus did not exist about these related, yet different, concepts. In fact, it was precisely that same year that Cas Mudde published his influential article on right-wing extremism [8] – a study that lay the groundwork for what has later become an authoritative conceptualization of the far/radical/extreme right – at least in Europe.[9] This conceptualization is rooted in Norberto Bobbio's classic distinction between, on the one hand, leftists who support policies designed to reduce social inequality, and, on the other hand, rightists who regard *social inequality* – and corresponding social hierarchies – as inevitable, natural, or even desirable.[10] Furthermore, unlike their moderate counterparts, members of the *far right* share an *authoritarian* inclination,[11] that is, an inherent need for sameness, oneness, and group authority, resulting in intolerance towards diversity and individual autonomy,[12] and some form of *nativism* or ethnic nationalism.[13] Mudde also distinguishes between, on the one hand, *radical* right actors who operate within democratic boundaries, and on the other hand, *extreme* right actors who openly reject democracy, and favour violent or other non-conventional means to generate political change. The *far right* may thus be used as a collective term comprising both (democratic) radicals and (anti-democratic) extremists, who all share three key features: acceptance of social inequality, authoritarianism, and nativism.

Turning to the 2018 Special Issue, five out of ten contributors provide or reference other scholars who provide explicit definitions of their overarching concepts. Three of those five definitions draw either directly or indirectly (via other scholars) on Mudde's conceptualization. In addition, Sweeney & Perliger's definition of the American far right is quite compatible to Mudde's by combining *internal homogenization*, which expresses the desire

that all people who reside in the homeland will share similar primordial characteristics, with *nativism*, here understood as opposition to foreign influence.[14]

Both conceptualizations (Mudde and Sweeney & Perliger) comprise elements that may be seen as *necessary* and, in combination, *sufficient* for the concept to be defined, which constitutes one of two prototypical concept structures proposed by Goertz.[15] The second concept structure is called “family resemblance” and requires sufficiency but not necessity. In other words, features that are important for certain members of “the family” will be included in the definition although they may not be shared by all members. This structure can be found in Freilich et al.’s definition of the American extreme right, which includes a number of features that are characteristic for some – but not necessarily all – actors associated with the American extreme right.[16]

Family resemblance definitions are typically longer and more detailed, which may be a strength if thick and exhaustive descriptions are required. At the same time, their level of detail may stand in the way of analytical precision and ability to travel across time and place. In our search for a *unifying definition*, we therefore suggest using Mudde’s framework as a shared point of departure for conceptualizing the far right, the radical right, and extreme right. In our opinion, this is the most cognizant conceptual framework developed thus far, and it has already proven useful in terms of generating theoretical debates and new avenues of research covering a wide range of topics involving (democratic and non-democratic) far-right actors in Europe, in the United States, and elsewhere.

This suggestion rests on the idea that we should keep definitions of the far/radical/extreme right separate from definitions of terrorism and violence. We see no good reason why a concept such as terrorism should be altered depending on its ideological prefix. In other words, we should avoid particularistic definitions of extreme-right terrorism, and instead be clear about what we mean by “extreme right” and what we mean by “terrorism”. After all, not all right-wing extremists or violent perpetrators are terrorists. One authoritative definition of terrorism argues that terrorists *deliberately* use or threaten violence to trigger “far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target.”[17] As several of the contributions to this Special Issue show, most violent attacks motivated by extreme-right ideas are spontaneous and therefore do not qualify as terrorism because they lack such deliberation.

However, Sweeney & Perliger argue in this Special Issue that even spontaneous attacks could qualify as terrorism if they promote political objectives by utilizing violence to generate fear and anxiety within some target group. This might lead to an over-stretching of the concept of terrorism. At the same time, we recognize a general unwillingness by authorities and politicians, especially in the United States and Germany, to use the term ‘terrorism’ when it comes to extreme-right attacks that were indeed premeditated. One reason may be that in the case of extreme-right terrorism, a deliberate use of violence to trigger repercussions beyond the immediate target can be hard to document because extreme-right perpetrators rarely issue demands or claim responsibility for the attacks they carry out. Most attacks are never claimed or explained by the perpetrators, but they generally involve demonstrating hostility towards, and installing fear in, some target group symbolized by the victim. Thus, although specific demands may be lacking, such attacks do contain a clear political message addressed to the target group, telling it that their presence is unwanted. As such, the target selection may be seen as a political message in and of itself, and the wider target group may be seen as the primary audience to be influenced by the attack.[18]

One could therefore consider an attack as *extreme-right terrorism* if the target selection is (1) premised on extreme right ideas, (2) the attack is premeditated, and (3) the violence is intended to trigger psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target. On the other hand, *extreme-right violence* does not require premeditation, and includes all violent attacks whose target selection is premised on extreme right ideas.

Data

The study of extreme-right terrorism and violence has traditionally been dominated by case studies drawing on rich qualitative data from original propaganda materials (magazines, fanzines, books etc.), interviews with current and former activists, newspaper article collections, and ethnographic field work. Such qualitative case studies have provided insights into the worldviews and inner dynamics of extreme-right groups in different countries, regions, and contexts. At the same time, quantitative data suitable for making comparisons across cases, over time, or between places, have been rare. To illustrate how different data sources have been used (and not used) in the two Special Issues, we have divided our data review into a qualitative and a quantitative section.

Qualitative Data

The clandestine nature of extreme-right terrorism and violence makes investigations into this topic inherently challenging. Unlike many other social science fields, valid and reliable data is difficult to retrieve, and access to activists and informants is limited. As a result, generating knowledge about this topic requires time and commitment. Furthermore, one is usually bound to rely on different types of sources that must be pieced together to gain both overview and insight. It is therefore no coincidence that many of the scholars involved in this field have spent large parts of their academic careers investigating actors on the extreme right. This is particularly true for many of the scholars involved in the 1995 Special Issue, such as, Ehud Sprinzak, Jeffrey Kaplan, Peter Merkl, Helene Lööw, Helmut Willems, Tore Bjørgo, and Leonard Weinberg. These scholars' life-long commitments are in many ways also reflected in the types of data used in their studies. Besides the general knowledge developed over years of investigations, they typically rely on a multitude of mostly qualitative sources, such as interviews, documents and propaganda produced by various extreme-right actors, as well as some official records, such as court documents and police reports.

Such qualitative data are particularly useful for gaining insights into how these groups and activists think and organize, and for uncovering influential narratives or ideological currents. Systematization and interpretation of such qualitative data may also serve to develop typologies of dominant actors, discourses, and types of violence, as exemplified in the 1995 Special Issue by the contributions from Sprinzak (types of terrorism), Kaplan (types of violent milieu), Merkl (types of violence), Willems (types of violent perpetrators), and Bjørgo (types of violent discourses). Other contributions from the 1995 Special Issue, most notably those from Lööw, Weinberg, Welsh, and Szymkowiak & Steinhoff, combine rich historical records with court documents, interviews, and police reports to conduct in-depth case studies of entire movements as well as local groups.

Large and diverse collections of mostly qualitative data remain an essential source of information for contemporary research on extreme-right terrorism and violence. One important development in this regard has been the evolution of the Internet and social media. This development has facilitated greater access to information about contemporary groups, networks, and discourses, including information that may have been previously inaccessible. In the 2018 Special Issue, the contributions from Macklin and Mareš illustrate the impressive amount of information that can be retrieved about semi-clandestine groups and networks by using the Internet and social media as primary sources.[19] At the same time, retrieving data from the Internet and social media raises a number of ethical concerns that scholars must be aware of when mapping and analysing contemporary actors.[20]

Some information, however, can only be obtained through interviews, and relies on access to the activists themselves. Three contributions from the 2018 Special Issue benefit from such interviews. Most notably, the study by Windisch et al. relies on life-history interviews with 89 white supremacists in the United States.[21] Preparing and carrying out such interviews is not a straightforward exercise. It requires long-term planning as well as building of rapport, which may in some cases take weeks and months. However, provided that the informants are willing to share otherwise inaccessible information, carrying out such interviews may be well worth the effort.

Another large body of interview materials has been retrieved by Hemmingby and Bjørge in their study of Anders Behring Breivik's target selection.[22] This study draws on access to 220 hours of video recordings and 1,200 pages of condensed transcripts from the police investigative interviews with Breivik. These interview data illustrate that Breivik's planning process was far from flawless, and that he also made several tactical mistakes and miscalculations while carrying out his attacks. More importantly, they illustrate how unpredictable situational factors had a decisive impact on the selected targets, and the lethality of the attacks.

Finally, Castelli Gattinara et al. combine different data sources in their study of another lone actor – Gianluca Casseri – including personal interviews with members of CasaPound Italia who had been interacting with Casseri before his attacks.[23] These interviews offer unique insights into Casseri's unfulfilled relationship with CasaPound, which according to Castelli Gattinara et al. is the key to understanding his decision to engage in violent action.

To conclude this section, we might also add that several of the more quantitatively oriented contributions to the 2018 Special Issue incorporate rich qualitative data into their analyses, often using the Internet as a primary source of information. Furthermore, behind any quantitative terrorism dataset lies a vast amount of qualitative data that has been systematically analysed and coded. In other words, no matter what one's preferred method of analysis is, qualitative data remain the bread-and-butter of the study of extreme-right terrorism and violence.

Quantitative Data

Having access to systematic data suitable for analysing variation between cases, across time, and between places, is essential for accurately describing the evolution of any social phenomenon as well as for testing theories. Again, considering the clandestine nature of extreme-right terrorism and violence, obtaining such data can be a challenge to researchers in this field. For example, apart from Willems' extensive perpetrator dataset,[24] the 1995 Special Issue contained little systematic data on violent events compiled by the researchers themselves. As a result, contributors who did refer to variation of violence relied on available government and police statistics, which in most countries were (and remain) a rather limited and unreliable source, as has been argued elsewhere.[25]

Turning to the 2018 Special Issue, it is encouraging to see that many contributors use unique datasets compiled by the researchers themselves, or by other researchers in the field. The United States is particularly well covered. First, using a grounded theory approach, Windisch et al. have developed a unique perpetrator dataset based on their life history interviews with former white supremacists.[26] Notably, this dataset enables comparisons between violent and non-violent activists – an important premise for investigating why and how some activists engage in violent action. Second, Freilich et al. rely on the United States Extremist Crime Database (ECDB) – a comprehensive events dataset covering all types of domestic terrorism in the United States post-1990, including the extreme right.[27] Finally, Sweeney & Perliger rely on the Combating Terrorism Center's (CTC) dataset of right-wing violence the United States,[28] which includes 4,420 violent events between 1990 and 2012, causing 670 fatalities and injuring 3,053 people.

Turning to Europe, Castelli Gattinara et al. draw on the Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence (RTV) dataset, which covers the most severe attacks and plots in Western Europe between 1990 and 2015, including 190 deadly events causing 303 fatalities.[29] Koehler uses data from his own Database on Terrorism in Germany (DTG), which includes data on 92 right-wing terrorist actors from 1963 onwards.[30] Bouhana et al. rely on an expanded version of Gill and colleagues' dataset of lone actors in Europe and the United States,[31] and a unique dataset on the pre-attack behaviour of extreme-right lone actors. Finally, in his study of right-wing terrorism and violence in Russia, Enstad has compiled an entirely new dataset (RTV-RUSSIA), modelled on the RTV dataset mentioned above.[32]

A number of interesting insights emerge from all these data. First and foremost, they show that since 1990, the number of deadly attacks motivated by extreme-right ideas exceeds that of any other ideology in Western

democracies, including Islamist terrorism. This is most evident in the United States from the ECDB dataset, which includes perpetrator types of different ideological backgrounds.[33] Furthermore, if we compare data from the RTV dataset on deadly attacks by the extreme right in Western Europe [34] with similar data on Islamist terrorism,[35] we see that extreme-right attacks outnumber Islamist attacks by far (when counting the number of attacks rather than the number of fatalities). In Russia, however, Islamist attacks (mainly related to the North Caucasus insurgency) appear to be more frequent, notwithstanding the fact that Russia has experienced more deadly attacks from the extreme right than any other country, as Enstad shows in his study. [36] Furthermore, because the intensity (number of fatalities per attack) of Islamist terrorism is considerably higher both in Russia and elsewhere, more people have been killed by Islamist terrorists in recent years than by violent perpetrators from the extreme right. Therefore, these figures suggest that from an operational counter-terrorism point of view, Islamist terrorism and terrorism from the extreme right represent two rather different types of threats: Islamist terrorism is relatively rare but often involves a high number of casualties, while extreme-right terrorism and violence is more frequent, but usually results in fewer casualties.

Another key finding addressed by several of the contributors to this Special Issue is the seemingly unorganized and spontaneous nature of extreme-right violence. This characteristic was also addressed by several of the contributors to the 1995 Special Issue (although based on less systematic evidence).[37] These general findings have important implications for the types of theories that may help explain why extreme-right violence occurs. Notably, they suggest that most extreme-right perpetrators may be more driven by emotional, relational, and situational dynamics than by deep ideological convictions or strategic calculation.

At the same time, we must not forget that more organized forms of violence from the extreme right can be found in some countries, perhaps most notably in Italy, as demonstrated both by Castelli Gattinara et al. in this Special Issue, as well as by Weinberg in the 1995 Special Issue.[38] Enstad also finds a higher level of organized militancy and a stronger ideological commitment among activists in Russia than in Western Europe. [39] Furthermore, Koehler shows that the seemingly unorganized nature of recent extreme-right violence in Germany was accompanied by several attacks and plots that, while fewer in numbers, were far better organized. [40] Similar organized threats were also demonstrated by the three case studies included in the 2018 Special Issue, covering National Action in the UK, the so-called Death Squad and the Hungarian Arrows National Liberation Army in Hungary, and the singular case of Anders Behring Breivik in Norway.[41] In other words, since we are not dealing with a uniform threat here, we need to tailor our analyses and responses accordingly.

Some of the datasets presented in the 2018 Special Issue can also be used to compare the extent of extreme-right terrorism and violence between different countries. Notably, they indicate that after 1990, the number of deadly attacks per million inhabitants has been several times higher in Russia than in any other country. In the West, the countries with the highest scores are Sweden and Germany, followed by the United States, the UK, Spain, and Greece.[42]

Two of the datasets allow comparisons between extreme-right perpetrators and other perpetrator types. For example, the ECDB figures show that in the United States, only twenty-four percent of extreme-right homicide offenders have some college education, compared to forty-five percent of jihadists and seventy-seven percent of left-wing activists. Furthermore, more than half of extreme-right homicide offenders had prior arrest records, and were significantly more likely to have criminal histories.[43] Compared to other perpetrators of political violence, those from the extreme right thus appear to experience a higher degree of societal marginalization.

Finally, in their comparative analysis of lone actors in Europe and the United States, Bouhana et al. find few significant differences in terms of the vast majority of pre-attack indicators, including those related to motivation, capability, leakage behaviour, and warning signs.[44] However, they also discovered significant differences, for example that lone actors from the extreme right were on average more thrill-seeking, impulsive, and angry than other lone actors. They were also more likely to stockpile weapons, have formal ties to extremist groups, and to have been victims of bullying during childhood.

Theory

Existing research on terrorism and violence from the extreme right may be characterised as diverse, disorganized, and discontinuous. It is *diverse* because it consists of contributions from many different disciplines that often do not speak to each other nor share the same research objectives. This can be illustrated by the disciplinary backgrounds of the contributors to the 1995 Special Issue, which include history (Löow), history of religion (Kaplan), social anthropology (Bjørge), sociology (Steinhoff; Willems), journalism (Szymkowiak), and political science (Merkel; Sprinzak; Weinberg; Welsh). The field is also rather *disorganized* and difficult to navigate, partly because of its interdisciplinary nature, but also because few efforts have been made to review it. Furthermore, those few reviews that exist are becoming outdated, and also mirror to a certain extent the diverse and disorganised nature of the field.[45] Finally, and perhaps due to its diverse and disorganised nature, the field has also become rather *discontinuous*. For example, none of the contributors to the 2018 Special Issue use any of the contributions from the 1995 Special Issue to guide their research. However, as the following theory review shows, similar theoretical arguments can be identified in both Special Issues, suggesting that a more unified approach to investigating extreme-right terrorism and violence might be within reach.

The 1995 Special Issue

The 1995 Special Issue was created on the basis of a workshop where scholars in the field were brought together to compare insights on extreme right terrorist groups and militant movements from different parts of the world. They were asked to focus their papers on how, under which circumstances, and for what motives, extremists turn from radical right politics – or from just harbouring racist or right-wing attitudes – to violent action.[46] Today, this process is generally referred to as violent radicalization.[47] In addition, the contributors were asked to apply or comment on Sprinzak's proposed theory of split delegitimization.

Sprinzak's theory is concerned with how extremist groups delegitimize their targets before an attack occurs – a sort of necessary condition for engaging in violence. The theory draws on Sprinzak's previous research on such delegitimization processes and terrorism on a broader level.[48] However, in his contribution to the 1995 Special Issue, Sprinzak claims that unlike most other terrorists, extreme-right terrorists “do not feel remorse about their violence and the atrocities they cause” and thus have “no need to undergo a profound psycho-political transformation to become brutal killers”.[49] Delegitimization of perceived enemies is thus an inherent part of becoming a right-wing extremist, according to Sprinzak.

When considering the applicability of Sprinzak's theory of extreme-right terrorism, we should keep in mind that it is primarily meant to explain processes of group radicalization. As such, it is not a holistic theory because enemy delegitimization is not a *sufficient* condition for engaging in violence. This is illustrated by the simple fact that most right-wing extremists never use physical violence despite the supposed inherent delegitimization of their enemies.

However, Ehud Sprinzak also highlighted another important condition for engaging in violence when arguing that “violence, and gradually terrorism, will only emerge when the group involved feels increasingly insecure or threatened [by their enemies]”.[50] In addition, Sprinzak lists four circumstances expected to increase the likelihood of violence: (1) a sudden and intense sense of insecurity which produces emotional extremist reactions; (2) a conviction of right-wing leaders that they can rationally benefit from terrorism; (3) a sense of increasing public support for radical action against “undesirable people”; and (4) the imposing presence of violent personalities whose resort to terrorism is made for purely personal-psychological reasons.[51] Thus, according to Sprinzak, a combination of enemy delegitimization with any of these four conditions will raise the likelihood of extreme-right terrorism.

In his study of right-wing violence in North America, Jeffrey Kaplan first provided rich details about various extreme right milieus, events, and individuals.[52] With regards to theory, Kaplan applied Campbell's theory of the cultic milieu [53] as well as religious mapping theory.[54] Both theories “posit deviance from the beliefs of

mainstream society as the key analytical factor.”[55] Thus, part one of Kaplan’s analysis was primarily oriented towards the ideational affinities of different extreme-right milieu in North America, with a special emphasis on their justifications for—or against—violence.

In part two of his contribution, Kaplan discussed Sprinzak’s theory of split delegitimization by applying it to the North American case. While recognizing that the theory offers valuable insights, Kaplan also highlights four areas in which the theory does not comply with the North American situation: (1) delegitimization in North America appeared to be a reciprocal rather than a unilateral process; (2) the theory underestimated the role of the state as a primary enemy for many activists; (3) the theory underestimated the religiosity of the American radical right; and (4) the theory may have underestimated how far even a democratic state is prepared to go in repressing radical-right movements.[56] Concerning this last question, Kaplan concludes that “state violence once unleashed can acquire a momentum of its own”, and that “the consequences are surely considerably more deleterious than the disquieting views espoused by the radical right.”[57] In other words, too much state repression is likely to cause more—rather than less—terrorism and violence.

In his comparative essay on extreme-right violence in Europe, Peter Merkl touched upon several issues. Notably, he argued that many victims of the extreme right were neither immigrants nor government representatives, but also included leftists, homosexuals, and homeless people. Merkl also emphasized the seemingly apolitical character of many attacks, meaning that true political motivation appeared to be lacking. Instead, Merkl attributed motives to “the undereducated, ‘no-future’ youth or underclass ‘losers’”. He also argued that most violent attacks appeared to be “uncoordinated responses to community panic and media hype regarding perceived ‘floods’ of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants”, and that by “making themselves the executors of community panic, the otherwise despised skinhead gangs are grasping at personal acceptance and legitimacy.”[58] Economic and social marginalization thus appeared to be key drivers of extreme-right violence, according to Merkl.

Heléne Lööw described similar tendencies in her study of racist violence in Sweden.[59] In addition to exploring Sweden’s historical experience with national socialism, Lööw offered four case studies of violent groups operating in different locations in Sweden during the early 1990s. Much in line with Merkl, she showed that the perpetrators of violence were typically unorganized fringe elements of the larger extreme-right scene. She also argued that a general hostility against foreigners in the local community, combined with the development of a violent white power subculture, were important preconditions for these offenders’ engagement in violent attacks.

In his study of “anti-foreigner violence” in Germany during the early 1990s, Helmut Willems engaged more directly with explicit theoretical claims about the underlying causes of extreme-right violence. Just like Merkl and Lööw, he noted that although political and ideological motives were present in some cases, most attacks came across as less politically motivated, although expressing a general notion of unease about the new influx of refugees. Willems then moved on to discuss *social disintegration theory*, which posits that right-wing violence may result from relative deprivation and a loss of social status. However, he found mixed results for this theory as it only explained a subset of his violent offender dataset. Willems therefore moved on to discuss how increased individualization and related problems of anomie and identity crisis may have led some individuals to violent attitudes and behaviour. However, Willems also noted that, just like social disintegration, individualization is not a sufficient condition for becoming a violent offender and must be combined with other conditions such as the emergence of violent subcultures.

Finally, Willems supplemented these findings with four “theses” about how interaction and communication processes shaped violent attitudes, dispositions, and behaviour in Germany in the early 1990s. These theses related to (1) how asylum procedures treat refugees as societal burdens; (2) how a lack of effective political solutions to increased immigration opens new opportunities for the extreme right; (3) how weak state authorities fail to punish racist violence and thereby lower the risk for engaging in violent attacks; and (4) how a shift in public opinion toward more xenophobic attitudes gives violent youths a sensation of public approval. To summarize Willems, the ebb and flow of extreme-right violence can be explained by combining structural factors such as grievances related to immigration, socio-economic hardship, and modernization

with subcultural and government responses to such structural changes. In other words, it is not immigration or relative deprivation alone that explains the violence, but the ways people and authorities relate and react to it.

Several of the contributions to the 1995 Special Issue engaged specifically with Sprinzak's model of split delegitimization, and with how different types of right-wing extremists *justify* the use of violence against external and/or internal enemies. For example, Bjørge developed a comparative analysis of how militant nationalists in Sweden, Norway and Denmark justified violence against external and internal enemies in ways which, on the surface, may look very different but were in fact similar in structure. He showed how national socialists dominated militant discourse in Sweden claiming that they were "the Aryan resistance movement" fighting against "the Zionist Occupation Government" (ZOG) and "the racial traitors". By contrast, in Norway and Denmark, the militant nationalists based their discourse on the legacy of the resistance against the German Nazi occupiers during World War II, claiming that they were "the new resistance movement", fighting "the invasion of foreigners" and "the present-day national traitors". The difference in discourse can be explained historically: Sweden – unlike Norway and Denmark – did not experience a brutal Nazi occupation during WWII, and the local Nazis never became national traitors. These different historical experiences may also help explain why militant neo-Nazism has been much more prevalent in Sweden than in Norway and Denmark. [60]

The three remaining contributions to the 1995 Special Issue offered rich case studies aimed at showing why and how terrorism from the extreme right occurred in three special cases: Italy; South Africa; and Japan.[61] Although there is much to learn about the particularities of these countries' extreme-right movements, we will not summarize these accounts here due to their context-specific nature, as well as due to space restrictions.

The 2018 Special Issue

Just like the 1995 Special Issue, the 2018 Special Issue was created on the basis of a workshop where leading scholars were invited to reflect on recent developments in the field, with a special emphasis on contemporary actors, their *modus operandi*, and the conditions shaping them. We also encouraged comparisons with previous actors and trends, other countries or regions, or other forms of political violence. Finally, we asked all contributors to reflect on how this threat is best understood theoretically, and on the types of labels and categories that most accurately describe it. Geographically, the 2018 Special Issue covers the United States, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, Hungary, Italy, and Norway.

In their study of white supremacists in the United States, Windisch et al. investigate how certain micro-situational factors help radicalized individuals overcome inherent barriers against violence.[62] Notably, they demonstrate how some activists were able to overcome fear and hesitation by (a) targeting vulnerable victims, (b) adhering to an audience that encouraged violence, and (c) utilizing clandestine attacks. Furthermore, and in line with several of the contributions to the 1995 Special Issue, they highlight how the habitual nature of violence cultivated within this subculture generate an immunity toward cognitive controls amongst several of the activists. Windisch et al. also highlight commonalities between violent extremism and general crime, indicating that extreme-right perpetrators, in many ways, resemble members of conventional street gangs. These insights have important implications for our understanding of these violent offenders, and for the types of measures that could be used to guide them away from violent subcultures.

In their study of fatal extreme-right attacks in the United States, Freilich et al. propose a number of theoretical approaches that may be used for future theory development.[63] For example, and much in line with Windisch et al., they argue that conceptualizing extreme-right violence as criminal events would allow researchers to build on well-established theories about subcultural dynamics and how certain social surroundings bring certain groups to engage in violent behaviour. Freilich et al. also highlight the highly complex causal patterns that must be traced between macro conditions such as relative deprivation and social disorganization on the one hand, and extreme-right terrorism and violence on the other hand. For this purpose, the authors propose several theoretical avenues, including social learning theory, environmental criminology, and various interactionist

and situational approaches.

In their contributions, both Sweeney & Perliger and Koehler focus on a specific form of violence, namely *spontaneous violence* by groups and individuals unaffiliated to extreme-right groups or organizations. [64] Investigating spontaneous violence is relevant because it is likely the most common form of violence motivated by extreme-right beliefs, at least within Western democracies. [65] Although Koehler uses the term “spontaneous” somewhat more freely than Sweeney & Perliger do, both studies appear to have captured similar trends in Germany and the United States. They also present similar explanations of this type of violence. In particular, and much in line with Ravndal’s proposed grievances-opportunities-polarization model, [66] they highlight the importance of grievances produced by ethnic diversity and increased immigration. In addition, Sweeney & Perliger highlight *grievances* related to marginalization as spontaneous perpetrators come from a lower socio-economic background and are usually younger, less educated, and more prone to be unemployed than perpetrators of planned attacks.

Both studies also address *opportunities* created by the authorities’ failure to correctly label and prosecute extreme-right violence as terrorism. This lowers the threshold for engaging in violent extremism because the risk of getting arrested and prosecuted is fairly low, and the punishment is less severe than for crimes labelled ‘terrorism’. An additional opportunity structure identified by Koehler in Germany is a recent subcultural turn away from party politics towards extra-parliamentary forms of activism. This shift has, according to Koehler, led to increased interaction between members of the public and established extremist groups with a record of violence. A similar dynamic was described by Lööw in her study of racist violence in Sweden during the early 1990s. [67] Finally, Koehler highlights the importance of recent *polarization* dynamics related to how increasing immigration has been handled by the government and by civil society. These dynamics echo those highlighted by Willems in his study of a similar wave of violence in Germany in the early 1990s. [68] In this regard, there appears to be considerable theoretical overlap between the 1995 and 2018 Special Issues.

Grievances and opportunities are also addressed by Enstad in his study of right-wing terrorism and violence in Russia. [69] In particular, and in line with several contributions from both Special Issues, Enstad highlights grievances caused by high immigration and socio-economic hardship as important preconditions for Russia’s astounding level of extreme-right violence. Several opportunities are also identified, including a combination of restrictive political opportunities within a permissive discursive environment, as well as the Internet as an arena for spreading violent propaganda. Considering how *limited* discursive opportunities have been suggested to influence *positively* on extreme-right violence in countries like as Sweden, [70] it is interesting to see how a highly permissive discursive environment, i.e. low social stigmatization of extreme-right views, appear to have had a positive impact on the level of extreme-right violence in Russia. Although these findings may come across as contradictory, they do in fact resonate well with Ravndal’s theorized effects from the discursive environment on extreme-right violence: “While extensive repression and stigmatization might fuel violence and militancy, a complete absence of repression and stigmatization might also lead to the same outcome (...). High or low repression and stigmatization should, in other words, not be seen as mutually exclusive conditions, but rather as two alternative paths that may lead to a similar outcome (equifinality).” [71]

The very same issue – the effects from permissive vs. repressive environments on violence – is addressed in the contributions by Macklin and Mareš, but using rather opposite cases. [72] On the one hand, Macklin investigates the (preliminary) effects of banning the UK group National Action, and asks whether such repressive measures reduce militant mobilization and violence, or simply provoke solidarity and resistance, thereby exacerbating the very tendencies that governments are trying to prevent. He finds that whilst the ban successfully dismantled National Action as an organization, it also engendered a period of ideological and organisational experimentation and adaption as those activists, undeterred by the ban, sought out new modes and methods of activism.

In contrast, Mareš discusses whether the *lack* of repressive measures against the far right in Hungary might have facilitated the emergence of two violent groups: the so-called Death Squad and the Hungarian Arrows National Liberation Army. Although these groups emerged during a time when public hostility against minorities in

general, and Roma gypsies in particular, was generally high, Mareš also shows that rising popularity of radical-right parties in Hungary has been followed by a decline of militant activism and violence. In other words, a permissive environment does not necessarily lead to more militancy and violence.

To complicate matters further, a couple of caveats should be made. First, although the UK has experienced some of the highest levels of extreme-right violence in Western Europe since 1990, the case of National Action is strictly speaking not a case of violence since the organisation never carried out any attacks. As such, the ban against National Action should first and foremost be considered as an(other) example of the UK's relatively high level of repression. Whether there is a causal connection between such high levels of repression and the level of extreme-right violence remains an open question – one that, despite some provisional evidence,[73] needs further investigation. Notably, Macklin finds that the UK police and security services have interdicted four extreme-right terrorist “plots” following the ban, at least two of which related directly to National Action.

Second, although Hungary's fairly permissive environment may have facilitated the emergence of two violent groups, we should keep in mind that the number of deadly attacks per million inhabitants is lower in Hungary post-1990 than in several other European countries, including Sweden, Germany, Spain, and the UK.[74] In other words, although radical-right sentiments are prevalent in Hungary, the level of extreme-right violence is not among the highest in Europe.

The remaining three contributions to the 2018 Special Issue are all concerned with lone actor terrorism. First, Castelli Gattinara et al. use the Italian lone actor Gianluca Casseri as a case for studying how *relational dynamics* might impact on individual violent radicalization.[75] This is an interesting exercise because the so-called relational approach to political violence is perhaps most evidently relevant for studying processes of group radicalization.[76] However, as Castelli Gattinara et al. demonstrate, social relations, and in particular unfulfilled social relations, may also play a crucial role in individual radicalization paths. This should perhaps not come as a surprise, considering how recent research demonstrates that social ties are an integral part of most lone actors' radicalization.[77] Yet unlike most lone actors, Casseri was not exactly socialized into terrorism. It was rather his experience of not being included, but neither being fully excluded from a radical group that led him to violent action. This form of partial embeddedness in radical or extremist milieu is an underdeveloped topic and one with potentially significant consequences. It should therefore be studied across a larger number of cases in future research.

In their contribution, Bouhana et al. explore the background and preparatory behaviours of extreme-right lone actor terrorists vis-à-vis other lone actor types.[78] In particular, they are interested in *risk indicators*, i.e. characteristics or experiences that increases an individual's likelihood of getting involved in terrorism. Such indicators are mainly developed as a tool for terrorism prevention and should not necessarily be seen as causal in and of themselves. However, some risk indicators may act as markers for the types of causal mechanisms that may lead to terrorism in the sense of representing their observable implications. Perhaps the most important finding emerging from Bouhana et al.'s analysis is the *lack* of significant differences between the background characteristics and preparatory behaviours of extreme right and other types of lone actors. This raises the question of whether or not risk assessment tools need to be tailored to ideology.

Finally, in their study of Anders Behring Breivik's target selection procedures, Hemmingby & Bjørge carefully trace the process from the point where Breivik had already been radicalised into a commitment to carry out terrorist attacks, and then through a complex target (de-) selection process, where a large number of potential targets were gradually reduced to two.[79] Notably, Hemmingby and Bjørge show how Breivik's personality and narcissistic nature, combined with his high endurance and technical abilities, enabled him to prepare and commit mass atrocities completely on his own. At the same time, they also show how he was quite average in other ways, and how a number of internal and external constraints limited the number of targets that were ultimately “available” to him.

The Way Forward – Distinguishing between Different Types of Violent Outcomes

Our review shows that there is indeed some theoretical overlap between the findings of the 1995 and 2018 Special Issues, as well as within each Special Issue. At the same time, it is difficult to identify dominating theories or ongoing theoretical debates in the two Special Issues (apart from the “requested” discussion of Sprinzak’s theory). This may partly result from the interdisciplinary nature of the field, but it could also be because existing scholarship appears to focus on (at least) three rather distinct violent outcomes.

A first type of outcome may be labelled *violent radicalization* and is essentially about the (often highly complex) paths towards violence that some individuals and groups experience. When investigating these types of processes, we are more interested in relevant events and experiences that happened *before* a violent event occurred, than in the actual event. Thus, the key question to be asked about this outcome type is why some individuals and groups turn to violence while a large majority do not.

When pursuing this question, societal conditions at the macro level appear less relevant than micro- and meso-level conditions at the individual and group levels.[80] For example, existing research suggests that emotions and social relations play important roles in violent radicalization processes.[81] One example from this Special Issue would be the case of Ginaluca Casseri, which demonstrates how unfulfilled social relations were important to understand his path towards violent action.[82] A more general theory of violence that could prove useful in future research on violent radicalization is the so-called Virtuous Violence Theory, which sees violence not as produced by isolated individuals, but as emerging from social relationships.[83] Virtuous Violence Theory posits that individuals are not violent in and by themselves, but always in relation to other individuals, circumstances, and situations. Most violence is intended to regulate social relationships, to set them straight in accordance with certain moral motives, that is, conceptions of right and wrong held by the perpetrators and shared by their community or in-group.

A second type of outcome may be labelled *violent events* and is essentially about explaining why, when, and how specific violent events or series of related events occurred. Unlike violent radicalization, this type of outcome requires explanations that are more oriented towards the situational context of an attack, as well as on the actual attack itself. What are the contextual barriers against, and drivers towards violent events, and which opportunity structures and conditions shape the targeting, intensity, and characteristics of an attack? These are some of the questions pursued by Windisch et al. in their study of the micro-situational factors of white supremacist violence.[84] Rather than looking at each individuals’ radicalization processes, Windisch et al. analyze the micro-situational factors that determine whether and how some extremists engage in violence. In doing so, they draw on Randall Collins’ renowned micro-sociological theory of violence, which is designed to explain the occurrence of violent events on a much broader scale.[85]

Violent events are typically investigated through case studies. However, they can also be investigated using large-N studies, in particular when trying to explain *how* violent events occur, i.e. the *modus operandi*. Why are some target groups selected rather than others? And why are some weapons and attack modes used more frequently? Several of the contributions of the 2018 Special Issue propose answer to these kinds of questions, using large-N datasets, most notably Freilich et al., Sweeney and Perliger, and Bouhana et al.[86]

On this note, we should be mindful that studies of violent events should be distinguished from studies of violent actors. The reason is that even violent actors – be that individuals or groups – are most of the time not violent. Most studies of violent actors are oriented towards explaining their mobilization or radicalization processes, but usually less focused on explaining when and how they engage in violence. To really understand when and how violent events occur, we need to isolate variables or conditions tailored to these particular questions. For example, Hemmingby and Bjørge do not investigate Breivik’s self-radicalization process in this Special Issue, but focus instead on factors explaining his target selection.[87]

Finally, a third outcome type – *aggregate levels of violence* – is essentially about explaining why some places and periods experience more (extreme-right) terrorism and violence than others do. Such explanations tend to be oriented towards structural and societal conditions at the macro level that may encourage (or discourage)

a higher level of violence over time. Amongst our three proposed outcome types, this is probably the one that remains least investigated empirically because systematic events data have been lacking.[88] At the same time, many of the theoretical claims proposed in both Special Issues are oriented towards this outcome type. These include claims about perceived grievances related to immigration, socio-economic hardship, or modernization; political opportunities or the lack thereof; and polarization dynamics, such as how contentious issues are treated in public debates, or the extent to which far right actors experience public stigmatization and repression.

By distinguishing more clearly between these three different violent outcomes, the field will hopefully move towards a more unified approach to the study of extreme right terrorism and violence. It may also demonstrate how (some) micro-, meso- and macro-level perspectives on extreme right violence are complementary rather than competing; after all, it is largely the nature of the outcome that determines the usefulness of a given theoretical perspective.

Conclusion

Although 23 years have passed since the previous Special Issue on terrorism and violence from the extreme right was published, the field remains rather diverse, disorganized, and discontinuous. On this note, we would like to emphasize that diversity is not necessarily a negative trait, but one that can potentially enrich the field. However, this warrants scholars to actually relate to—and build on—each other's research findings. The aim of this review has therefore been to help prepare the ground for a more unified research agenda. On the conceptual level, we argued that future research should align itself with Mudde's conceptualization of the radical, extreme, and far right, which is now well established in the broader study of far-right politics. Besides encapsulating three core features of the far right—social inequality; authoritarianism; and nativism—this conceptual paradigm also distinguishes radicals and populists from *extremists* by highlighting their anti-democratic attitudes and behaviours.

We also argued that qualitative data remains the bread-and-butter in this field, providing insights into individual and group radicalization processes as well as into the situational contexts from which violent events tend to emerge. At the same time, a general lack of systematic events data has inhibited the field from moving forward. It is therefore encouraging to see the growing amount of both qualitative and quantitative data now available in this field, exemplified by several of the contributions to this Special Issue. In other words, the time has come for scholars to start communicating with each other more intensely, sharing data, and testing each other's theoretical claims and assumptions.

In doing so, we have suggested to distinguish between (at least) three different outcome types: violent radicalization; violent events; and aggregate levels of violence. By being more explicit about the types of outcomes one seeks to explain, scholars in this field will hopefully develop more rigorous theories that can be tested across a larger number of cases and contexts.

Finally, if we were to derive three key themes from this comparative review, these would be *emotions*, *relations*, and *repression*. In addition to being recurrent themes in both Special Issues, these three themes also share a similar causal ambiguity in the sense that they can both serve to facilitate and discourage extreme-right terrorism and violence, depending on how they are configured. Future research should therefore aim at understanding how different emotional, relational, and repressive configurations might impact on individual and group radicalization processes, the occurrence and characteristics of violent events, and on the accumulation of such events over time and between places.

Appendix I

Table 1 – The 1995 Special Issue: *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Vol. VII, No. 1, 1995)

Author(s)	Title
<i>Ehud Sprinzak</i>	Right-Wing Terrorism in a Comparative Perspective: The Case of Split Delegitimization
<i>Jeffrey Kaplan</i>	Right-Wing Violence in North America
<i>Peter H. Merkl</i>	Radical Right parties in Europe and Anti-Foreign Violence: A Comparative Essay
<i>Heléne Lööw</i>	Racist Violence and Criminal Behaviour in Sweden: Myths and Reality
<i>Helmut Willems</i>	Development, Patterns and Causes of Violence against Foreigners in Germany: Social and Biographical Characteristics of Perpetrators and the Process of Escalation
<i>Tore Bjørge</i>	Extreme Nationalism and Violent Discourses in Scandinavia: 'The Resistance', 'Traitors', and 'Foreign Invaders'
<i>Leonard Weinberg</i>	Italian Neo-Fascist Terrorism: A Comparative Perspective
<i>David Welsh</i>	Right-Wing Terrorism in South Africa
<i>Kenneth Szymkowiak and Patricia G. Steinhoff</i>	Wrapping up in Something Long: Intimidation and Violence by Right-Wing Groups in Postwar Japan

Table 2 – The 2018 Special Issue: *Perspectives on Terrorism* (Vol. XII, No. 6, 2018)

Author(s)	Title
<i>Jacob Aasland Ravndal and Tore Bjørge</i>	Investigating Terrorism from the Extreme Right: A Review of Past and Present Research
<i>Steven Windisch, Pete Simi, Kathleen Blee, and Matthew DeMichele</i>	Understanding the Micro-Situational Dynamics of White Supremacist Violence in the United States
<i>Joshua D. Freilich, Steven M. Chermak, Jeff Gruenewald, William S. Parkin, and Brent R. Klein</i>	Patterns of Violent Far-Right Extremist Crime in the United States
<i>Matthew Sweeney and Arie Perliger</i>	Explaining the Spontaneous Nature of Far-Right Violence in the United States
<i>Daniel Koehler</i>	Recent Trends in German Right-Wing Violence and Terrorism: 'Hive Terrorism' as a New Tactic?
<i>Johannes Due Enstad</i>	The Modus Operandi of Right-Wing Militants in Putin's Russia, 2000-2017
<i>Graham Macklin</i>	Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism in Britain: The Case of National Action
<i>Miroslav Mareš</i>	Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Hungary at the Beginning of the 21st Century
<i>Pietro Castelli Gattinara, Francis O'Connor, and Lasse Lindekilde</i>	No Country for Acting Alone? The Neo-Fascist Movement and Lone-Actor Terrorist Attacks in Italy
<i>Noémie Bouhana, Emily Corner, Paul Gill and Bart Schuurman</i>	Background and Preparatory Behaviours of Right-Wing Extremist Lone Actors: A Comparative Study
<i>Cato Hemmingby and Tore Bjørge</i>	Terrorist Target Selection: The Case of Anders Behring Breivik

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Notes

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Understanding the Micro-Situational Dynamics of White Supremacist Violence in the United States

by Steven Windisch, Pete Simi, Kathleen Blee, and Matthew DeMichele

Abstract

While substantial effort has been devoted to investigating the radicalization process and developing theories to explain why this occurs, surprisingly few studies offer explanations of the micro-situational factors that characterize how extremists accomplish violence. Relying on in-depth life history interviews with 89 former white supremacists, we analyzed the situational, emotional, and moral considerations surrounding white supremacist violence. Overall, we identified a variety of strategies white supremacists utilize for overcoming emotional and cognitive obstacles required to perform violent action. Furthermore, we also identified the callous effect of habitual violence. We conclude this article with suggestions for future research and recommendations for practitioners addressing terrorism prevention initiatives.

Keywords: Violence, white supremacy, micro-level, life history interviews, desensitization

Introduction

The study of violent offenders often relies on regional, national, or international factors as a way to understand the manifestation of violence. Today, there is a growing consensus among scholars that macro-level factors such as residential mobility, income inequality as well as population density and heterogeneity are associated with higher rates of violent crime.[1] Social scientists have also examined individual-level and situational factors surrounding violence such as the presence of weapons or drugs/alcohol, the role of bystanders, and certain personality characteristics (e.g., low self-control, psychopathology).[2] Each of these lines of research has added a great deal of insight by emphasizing how social structural features shape the nature and prevalence of violence as well as how internal and context-specific processes influence the expression of violence.

In the case of terrorism, violence is often discussed in the context of radicalization processes,[3] offender characteristics,[4] and distinctions between group-based and lone actor offenders.[5] Generally, violent extremists are presumed to possess strong ideological convictions that motivate their violence.[6] While radical ideologies are associated with violent performances, extremist violence does not derive directly from the presence of ideological justifications.[7] Rather, a variety of micro-level dynamics interact with radical ideologies to provoke and channel extremist violence through individual experiences.[8]

Despite wide recognition among academics of the rarity of terrorism,[9] prior theoretical explanations of violent extremism often take for granted the requirements necessary to commit an act of violence. This line of research often conflates attitudes and behaviors despite decades of social psychological research showing only weak connections between beliefs and actions.[10] Rather, violence is rare and more difficult to commit because humans are generally socialized toward non-violence and avoiding environments that put their safety at risk. For example, even under the most intense situational pressures that encourage violent action, front-line soldiers may intentionally miss their targets and/or refuse to kill enemy soldiers.[11] More generally, when situations involve violence, it is mostly “incompetent” fighting such as failing to hit one’s target or hitting the wrong target.[12]

With that said, people can become violent when they are enmeshed in situations where cognitive and emotional controls (e.g., fear, personal responsibility) that guide their behavior in socially acceptable ways are suspended. Social scientists have identified a variety of social-psychological techniques that increase the likelihood of violence such as moral disengagement[13] and emotional dominance[14] as well as dehumanization and deindividuation.[15] The suppression of cognitive and emotional controls has multiple consequences including

the deactivation of self-awareness, hesitation, guilt, shame, and fear. When these mechanisms are present, it becomes possible for usually non-violent, morally virtuous people to commit acts of destructive cruelty.

In addition to explaining more ordinary, generic forms of violence,[16] the suppression of cognitive and emotional controls is also theorized to apply to extremist violence.[17] From this perspective, individuals who possess radical ideological beliefs are no better at violence than anyone else. Although motives and ideology are important in establishing a history of violence, extremists still experience cognitive and emotional barriers when facing an adversary.[18] In light of this, violent extremists may possess inclinations toward violent confrontation due to ideological convictions, but these individuals must still overcome some of the same micro-level obstacles as non-extremists in order to perform acts of violence.

To address the shortage of studies that focus on micro-situational factors related to how extremists accomplish violence, we analyze how white supremacists cognitively and emotionally express themselves while engaging in violent performances. Rather than focusing on extremism as a specialized type of violence, we adopt a perspective that emphasizes the importance of contextualizing extremism within the broader realm of violent behavior. In doing so, we ask the following question: Do white supremacists experience cognitive and emotional obstacles (e.g., fear, hesitation) prior to violent incidents, and if so, what strategies do they utilize for suppressing these feelings? In addition to our primary research question, we also investigate the emotional and cognitive transformations that white supremacists experience as a result of habitual violence. To answer these questions, we rely on extensive life history interviews with 89 former US white supremacists who see themselves as victims of a world that is on the brink of collapse,[19] unite around genocidal fantasies against racial, religious, and sexual minorities, and have extensive histories of involvement in violent activity.[20]

Suppressing Cognitive and Emotional Controls

Although it is common for people to experience *conflict*, reaching a point of *violent conflict* is more difficult. A major obstacle to committing violence is suppressing cognitive and emotional controls such as fear, personal responsibility, and hesitation.[21] While numerous explanations may account for how people behave in socially acceptable ways, people generally avoid violence for two reasons. First, humans are typically socialized toward non-violence. Second, humans possess certain qualities such as the fear of being hurt by their opponent when violence is threatened.[22] Scholars focused on the situational dynamics of violence highlight a variety of techniques that help suppress these controls.[23] For instance, while moral principles act as guides for prosocial behavior, humans have been found to selectively disengage these values prior to participating in antisocial behavior. Bandura refers to this process as *moral disengagement* in which people commit violence by diffusing personal responsibility, dehumanizing victims, minimizing consequences, and using language that rationalizes their actions (e.g. “collateral damage”).[24]

Another technique involves *deindividuation*, which refers to a psychological state in which inner restraints are lost when “individuals are not seen or paid attention to as individuals.”[25] Based on this perspective, humans naturally act in a rational, orderly, constrained manner and seek to inhibit socially unacceptable desires. For violence to occur; however, individuals must suppress these constraints through a process of deindividuation. According to Zimbardo, a number of micro-situational conditions can produce deindividuation such as wearing a mask to conceal one’s face or blending in with a large group of attackers.[26] Overall, a substantial body of research has found that individuals who believed their identity was unknown were more likely to behave in an aggressive and punitive manner.[27]

Related to—but distinct from—moral disengagement and deindividualization is *emotional dominance*. [28] Based on this perspective, conflict between two parties generates a barrier to violence referred to as confrontational tension, which is characterized by fear and hesitation. When two parties clash, both sides will exchange insults and hostile gestures but typically stop short of violence. With that said, Collins introduces four pathways for overcoming confrontational tension, including: (1) targeting vulnerable victims; (2) participating in a group that encourages violence; (3) conducting clandestine attacks; and (4) fighting at a distance to avoid confronting

the enemy face-to-face.[29] Individuals who utilize these pathways are able to suppress confrontational tension, which allows them to establish emotional dominance and attack their targets.

Based on this body of research, it appears that people can selectively deactivate cognitive and emotional controls that interfere with the commission of violent performances. While support for these claims has been found among non-extremists,[30] less research has focused on whether similar processes are also present among violent extremists.[31]

Methodology

Data Collection

The current study relies on life history interviews with 89 individuals who self-identified as former white supremacists. We identified interviewees by snowball sampling from multiple starts to ensure variety in the location and type of extremist group.[32] We developed initial contacts for the snowball chains through a variety of means, including our research team's extensive prior research with active and inactive far-right extremists, identifying former extremists with a public presence (e.g., media, book authors), and using referrals from our project partners.[33] This snowball sampling procedure produced contacts that otherwise would not have been accessible using traditional means of sampling such as mailing lists.[34] Although snowball sampling minimizes the generalizability of the results, the goal of qualitative research in this case is the identification of social processes and describing causal mechanisms.

Our sampling method resulted in life history interviews with 89 former members of US white supremacist groups. Participants were interviewed in the places they now live, with 85 located in 24 states across all regions of the country and 4 in Canada. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 61 years. In terms of gender, the sample included 68 males and 21 females. 17 participants described their current socioeconomic status as lower class, 28 as working class, 31 as middle class, and 5 as upper class.[35] In terms of length of activism in white supremacism, participation ranged from 3 to 21 years.

Procedures and Data Analysis

Rapport was established prior to interviews through regular contact with participants via telephone and email. Interviews were conducted in private settings such as residential homes and hotel rooms as well as public settings such as restaurants and coffee shops.[36] Most of the interview was spent eliciting an in-depth life history to produce narratives that reflect the complexities and intersectionality of identity, ideology, and life experiences.[37]

The interviews included questions about broad phases of the participant's extremism, such as entry, involvement, and disengagement, with probes to encourage participants to elaborate on aspects of their life histories. Participants were asked to describe their childhood experiences as an initial starting point. Although participants were periodically asked direct questions to focus on specific topic areas, the interviews relied on an unstructured format intended to generate unsolicited data embedded in their personal narrative. We view the elicited narratives as instructive in terms of assessing how individuals make sense of their lives.[38] Each interview concluded with more structured questions and scale items to collect comparable information across interviewees in terms of risk factors (e.g., history of child abuse, mental health problems), demographic information, and criminality. Following the interview, all audio recordings were transcribed with only minor edits. As one indication of the depth and detail of the data collection, the interview sample generated 10,882 transcribed pages discussing participants' experiences prior to involvement, entry into the movement, and exit from the movement.

In terms of analyses, the current study relies on a modified grounded theory approach.[39] The use of grounded theory allows the researcher to systematically, yet flexibly, analyze qualitative data in order to develop theories "grounded" within the data.[40] Grounded theory allows researchers to combine a more open-ended, inductive

approach while also relying on existing literatures to guide the research and help interpret the findings. While the focus of the current study aims to better understand the micro-situational dynamics of white supremacist violence, the initial coding process examined all phases of our participants’ life histories including adolescence, extremist involvement, and exit.

The initial coding process involved various steps, but began by reading entire interview transcripts line-by-line to determine differences and similarities within and across our participants. This technique involves the construction of themes and subthemes as researchers analyzed the data. Codes were used to organize the data into similar concepts. At the same time, memos were used throughout the analysis process to connect emerging themes. After the codes and memos were developed, we compared themes across the sample of participants. Once all participants were coded, final ratings were discussed and reviewed among all authors for quality assurance.

Several limitations of this study are important to mention. First, the retrospective nature of the life history interviews raises questions about validity and reliability due to memory erosion, distortion, and selective recall.[41] The practice of remembering is a reconstructive process where memories of events are typically reinterpreted during each recall.[42] Despite this concern, the rich life history accounts provide important insight from participants’ perspective. Second, due to the relatively hidden nature of this population, the sample was derived through snowball techniques and, as a result, is not representative which prevents generalizing from these findings. The goal of a grounded theory approach; however, is to develop a conceptual explanation that closely fits the data (or incidents), which the concepts are proposed to represent. Although grounded theory is not intended to provide generalizations, the hypotheses developed can be tested in future studies.

A Violent Subculture of White Supremacist Extremism

Overall, a substantial portion of the sample reported extensive histories of misconduct including property offenses such as shoplifting and vandalism as well as variety of violent offenses such as murder, attempted murder, street fights, violent initiation rituals, and bomb making. As Table 1 illustrates, 68 (76%) participants reported a history of delinquent activity, 62 (69%) reported a history of arrest, and 48 (55%) spent time in prison.[43]

Table 1. Adult Criminal Conduct and White Supremacist Violence

Variable	Participants	Percent
History of Delinquency	68	76%
History of Arrest	61	69%
History of Incarceration	48	55%
History of Extremist Violence	61	69%
Use of Weapon		
No Weapon(s) Used	20	33%
Cold Weapons (knives, bats)	22	36%
Firearms	2	3%
Combination	17	28%
Targets of Violence		
Whites	55	90%
Racial Minorities	56	92%
Sexual Minorities	27	44%
Religious Minorities	14	23%
Interracial Couples	17	28%
Other (e.g., homeless people)	30	49%

In terms of extremist violence, 61 (69%) participants reported a wide range of violent performances including ideologically motivated activities (e.g., “gay-bashings”) as well as non-ideologically motivated acts (e.g., neighborhood violence, school fights). Although a minority of the sample were not directly involved in violence ($n = 27$; 31%), each participant belonged to a group that included members who were regularly violent.

Among the 61 violent extremists, 20 (33%) participants did not report using weapons during violent altercations and instead participated in fist fights. Alternatively, 22 (36%) participants indicated the use of cold weapons (e.g., bats, knives), 2 (3%) used firearms, and 17 (28%) participants used a combination of cold weapons, firearms, and explosives (e.g., Molotov cocktail). Based on the data, targets of extremist violence were dispersed among whites ($n = 55$; 90%); racial minorities ($n = 56$; 92%); sexual minorities ($n = 27$; 44%); religious minorities ($n = 14$; 23%); interracial couples ($n = 17$; 28%); and other targets ($n = 30$; 49%).

To provide more specificity to these descriptive findings, the current article focuses on how people cognitively and emotionally express themselves while engaging in violent performances. Since violence has been found to be influenced by individuals’ cognitive and emotional state,[44] a better understanding of one’s psychological presence while engaging in violent performances should help identify key antecedents of violent confrontations. Throughout the following section, we present life history interview data that illustrate strategies participants utilized for suppressing cognitive and emotional controls. Following this, we demonstrate how habitual violence can generate an immunity toward psychological anxieties.

Suppressing Cognitive and Emotional Controls

As Table 2 illustrates, we identified a variety of techniques for suppressing cognitive and emotional controls, including targeting vulnerable victims; participating in groups that encourage violence; and utilizing clandestine attacks to conceal the threat from their targets. The techniques we present are not mutually exclusive as a large portion of our sample ($n = 44$; 72%) utilized multiple techniques over the course of their extremist careers. Specifically, we identified 17 (28%) participants who only utilized one technique, 12 (20%) who utilized two, and 32 (53%) participants who utilized three techniques. In the following sections, we examine each technique in greater detail.

Table 2. *Micro-Situational Dynamics of White Supremacist Violence*

Variable	Participants	Percent
Suppressing Cognitive and Emotional Controls		
Targeting Vulnerable Victims	37	61%
Participation in a Supportive Group	61	100%
Conducting Clandestine Attacks	40	66%
Adhering to Subcultural Norms	47	77%
Cognitive and Emotional Transformation		
Violence as Rewarding	38	62%
Violence as Normal	39	64%

The first suppression technique we identified was a type of “engineered violence” where participants described targeting individuals whom they viewed as unable to defend themselves. A majority of the participants ($n = 37$; 61%) discussed targeting homeless people and homosexuals who were situationally defenseless or minors who could not physically protect themselves in a fight. For example, Freddie describes attacking a group of teenagers returning from a concert and realizing the fight was not “fair.”

We were doing clockwork orange stuff like getting homeless people and gays because there was no one there to help them... There was a time when we were beating up these hippie kids coming from a Reggae concert and we put a tack hammer in the kid's head. That night was one of the first nights where I remember thinking, "This isn't fair," almost like empathy in a way, and then real quickly I was like, "All right, get rid of it ... get rid of that thought." I remember thinking that stuff, but it didn't stop me. I might have paused for an extra punch, just to think about it for a second, but then I made it go away and went right back to what I was doing.... We made them our enemy, you know, "They were bad for America, so fuck them." (Freddie, Interview 5, 31 May 2014).

Similar to other participants, Freddie's account illustrates a type of predatory violence that targeted individuals based on their perceived vulnerabilities. From a psychological perspective, targeting youth, homeless people, and homosexuals who were situationally defenseless provided an emotional boost in the form of added confidence because they felt these individuals would be easily defeated. Although Freddie did not initially experience apprehension in carrying out the attack, seeing the physical damage that ensued weakened his fortitude and generated some misgivings about the fairness of the violence. For Freddie, however, such thoughts were momentary and he quickly suppressed the apprehension through self-talk strategies (e.g., "get rid of that thought"). In conjunction with these self-talk strategies, Freddie and others constructed a narrative that homeless people, homosexuals, and "hippy kids" were "bad for America," which further suppressed cognitive and emotional controls. In doing so, Freddie was reinforced by the "righteousness" of a white supremacist ideology and was able to attack his victims without succumbing to feelings of empathy, guilt, shame, or personal responsibility.[45]

The second technique for overcoming emotional and cognitive controls involved belonging to an audience that encouraged violence. Overall, 61 participants (100%) belonged to a group that endorsed violence as part of its collective identity, which reinforced this attitude among individual members.[46] Being a member of an extremist group was intrinsically linked to doing violence in the name of the group and unconditionally supporting other extremist members. From this perspective, the collective nature of the group helped individuals overcome potential apprehension associated with fighting and connected violence to expressions of collective support and enjoyment. Street culture, more generally, involves ongoing character contests that affirm dangerousness and the ability to fight, both of which are essential attributes for extremist members and street fighters.[47] In this way, belonging to an extremist group is more than just style or membership; rather, it requires performance. For example,

I had gotten in fights but there was always fear behind that. It was probably like that with a lot of people...but I got these guys behind me and we all have each other's backs. That strengthened my commitment... Also, if you pull back then there's fear of them coming after you because you didn't give it what you should of. It's as if "We're counting on you and you back down then, we're coming after you." So that always made you go. It almost made you want to be the first to punch somebody because then you're the driving force. (Kevin, Interview 9, 7 July 2014)

Kevin's account illustrates a type of "narrative violence" that builds solidarity among group members and communicates a message of group empowerment and racial identity.[48] Although Kevin experienced fear prior to fighting, the group's attitude toward violence played a significant role in strengthening his commitment and overcoming his personal anxieties. At the same time, blending in with the group of attackers diffused Kevin's level of individual identity,[49] which helped to reduce feelings of personal responsibility and fear. Kevin's account also underscores the fear of disappointing or upsetting his fellow group members if he were to lose his nerve and "back down." In this way, Kevin felt a sense of responsibility to prove his usefulness to the group, which reinforced and increased his propensity for aggression.[50]

A third technique we identified involved relying on an element of surprise to execute violent attacks. Almost two-thirds of the sample ($n = 40$; 66%) attacked their targets unexpectedly or pretended to be non-threatening until immediately prior to the attack. In doing so, these individuals prevented the accumulation of fear before it could occur.[51] These attacks were often premeditated action-sequences set in motion prior to the immediate

encounter. For example, Jim describes a situation in which he and another group member lured and attacked their targets without warning.

Me and my buddy Sammy would dress up like square white boys in Polo shirts and pose like we're from New Mexico and we wanted to start getting pounds [of drugs] off these guys. We would show up and they would over charge us...they were all playing the game and they would be like, "alright cool, well I got 2 lbs. I'll give it to you for \$5,000 each" and they are like only \$3,500 each. And we would act all cool and then pull out guns and be like, "get on the floor you fuckin nigger fuck. What do you think we are lame ass white boys?"...We would get Mexicans or Blacks you know gangsters who thought they were tough. We loved having them let their guards down like "look at these square white boys" and then come out with our guns and they would be like, "fuck." (Jim, Interview 46, 10 May 2015)

For Jim, the specifics of the attack (e.g., location, target) were premeditated to exploit the vulnerability of their targets. In addition to possessing a surreptitious advantage, Jim also achieved an advantage in terms of numbers and weaponry, which has also been found among more conventional violent offenders such as violent football hooligans and street fighters.[52] Further, Jim's account illustrates an aspect of street culture by indicating that his targets were "all playing the game." According to Anderson, street culture articulates powerful norms that govern interpersonal public behaviors, especially with regard to violence. As such, street culture outlines the proper way to present oneself in a manner that demands respect and deters acts of victimization from others. [53] Based on this perspective, over charging Jim for the drugs was considered a violation of the street culture that helped to rationalize his actions and remove any guilt that may have disrupted the attack. As a result, Jim does not view his targets as "innocent bystanders" or "civilians" undeserving of being robbed. Rather, they were viewed as willful participants who transgressed the street culture, thus making violent action acceptable, appropriate, and even obligatory. In this way, the likelihood of extremist violence arising is not only defined by the characteristics of the perpetrators (e.g., race, religious/sexual orientation) but also by the cultural context in which it occurs.

Finally, while prior research suggests that people are more likely to behave in an aggressive and punitive manner when their identities are unknown,[54] we identified a substantial number of participants ($n = 47$; 77%) who preferred attacks that involved fighting face-to-face. Subjects often described this style of violence in terms of an expression of masculinity and physical prowess. Masculinity in an extremist context was often constructed in terms of toughness and willingness to use physical force.[55] For example, Stanley discusses the intimate and personal nature of fist-fighting that could not be achieved using a firearm.

What makes us more of a threat is that we are personal. It is a personal thing that you become white power, because you are feeling that your family is being attacked. You want your enemies to feel that personalization when they are attacked....We're going to look you in the eye. We're going to feel your life drain on our hands....We're not some pussy that's going to do drive-bys; its execution. You know who killed you. You know who fucked you up. That's what got me off.... If I don't like you, I'm not going to shoot you from 50 feet away. You have every chance to defend yourself. If you can best me, best me. (Stanley, Interview 11, 14 July 2014)

Like other participants, Stanley's statement suggests some white supremacists adhere to a version of the street culture that glorifies fist fighting over other types of violence.[56] For Stanley, interpersonal violence was more sensual and intimate, which provided him a sense of personalization he could not attain with other types of violence (e.g., drive-bys).[57] In the context of both a willingness to be violent and a cultural association between violence and masculinity,[58] the extremist group provided a means to express individual aggression. In this way, fighting was seen as a proof of manliness, regardless of whether the individual won or lost.[59] Similar to Stanley, other participants often described interpersonal violence as an "alpha male" or masculine endeavor;[60] whereas, shooting or bombing people from a distance was considered weak and cowardly.[61] For these individuals, interpersonal violence reinforced their self-image as a "bad ass" and "Aryan warrior." [62]

As illustrated throughout this section, our participants utilized a variety of techniques for suppressing cognitive and emotional controls, including targeting vulnerable victims, adhering to an audience that encourages

violence, and conducting clandestine attacks.[63] As a departure from some findings of previous research, a substantial portion of our participants did not prefer to remain anonymous by attacking their targets from a distance but rather preferred to fight their opponents face-to-face. Such a departure hints at organizational and ideological factors that exist among white supremacists who often celebrate hyper-masculinity and out-group humiliation. In the next section, we discuss the emotional and cognitive transformation that accompanies habitual extremist violence.

Cognitive and Emotional Transformation

The role of emotion is a key micro-sociological tool for analyzing violent situations.[64] Our data provide insight regarding how individuals interpret violent experiences. In fact, several participants (n = 38; 62%) indicated that fighting was enjoyable, in part, because of the physiological stimulation violence provided. For example, Chester discussed intoxication and the enjoyment he experienced after a fight.

There was definitely some things that were intoxicating about it, especially the power that you felt afterwards. Even if I knew I was going to win the fight, I would be terrified because you had adrenaline going through your body, there's always that fear. I didn't get to enjoy it, not at all, but after that, the knock out effects after is better than any drug. I definitely enjoyed that... there was something intoxicating about winning that you get a high off of. (Chester, Interview 2, 22 October 2013)

Participation in thrilling or dangerous activities is associated with the release of reward-motivated hormones, including norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin.[65] In turn, this physiological reaction, referred to as "fight or flight,"[66] generates a desire for excitement and adventure.[67] Moreover, fighting was also found to provide a shared sense of accomplishment and solidarity among participants.[68] For instance, Chester experienced academic failure (e.g., poor grades) and suspensions from his high school football team. In this way, fighting provided Chester with a feeling of victory or "winning" that he was unable to attain from more conventional outlets.[69] In this sense, violence is attractive because it provides its own reward system that can offset a lack of achievement in others areas of a person's life. Analytically, the importance of this observation is that it implies a desire for violent expression rather than ideology may be the primary initial attraction to extremism. Of course, this finding does not negate the possibility that ideology, over time, becomes a core dimension of what helps sustain a person's commitment.

While most of the sample indicated that fighting was initially frightening, many participants (n = 39; 64%) described a transformation in how they came to view violence. For these individuals, fighting became normalized as a daily or weekly occurrence, which served to desensitize them to emotional and cognitive anxieties. As Toby explains, a number of factors help individuals learn to enjoy violence.

I think that's addictive. The adrenaline rush and the sense of belonging and camaraderie. It was never difficult to find violence. You know bars fights, parties, white power music shows. There was always low hanging fruit everywhere. When your five guys fight eight and win it's like, the feeling you get, the rush from it that was pretty fantastic. I learned to like it... the more you do that stuff, the more desensitized you become. The more I did stuff, the more desensitized I became. If you get punched out than it's nothing a couple beers can't fix anyways right? (Toby, Interview 16, 27 May 2014)

As Toby's account illustrates, violence was not only normalized by its prevalence in the lives of our participants but in many ways was an important source of pleasure. In this way, violence became enjoyable in the sense that it became a defining feature of a fun night out, which also typically included smoking, drinking, and/or attending music shows.[70] In this way, participants were able to transform the monotony of everyday life by engineering violent conflicts.[71] Similar to Toby, Joel describes a transformation in suppressing his fears and becoming desensitized to violent encounters:

I used to avoid fights at all costs. I did not like it. After getting jumped that changed. I no longer felt pity for people. I no longer feared for my own safety. I mean I guess it was kind of the odd thing of getting

beat that badly and a week or two later I am still alive, I am fine and everything functions...I always refer to that line in *Fight Club* where he talks about how once you realize you are not made of glass. And I used to always tell the younger guys you are not made of glass...that was exactly what I was trying to say because violence was such a regular occurrence that eventually I think people just became immune, it no longer was shocking, or the adrenaline no longer went off like it did when you first started fighting. (Joel, Interview 59, 5 October 2015)

Similar to other participants, Joel initially did not enjoy fighting and went to great lengths to avoid violent confrontation. After getting jumped into a white supremacist group, however, Joel gradually developed an immunity toward the shock of fighting because he realized most fights end without serious damage.[72] Moreover, similar to the process of desensitization,[73] the regularity of violence deflated the shock of fighting for Joel and removed any guilt or “pity” he felt toward his targets. Based on this perspective, as Joel became emotionally comfortable with physical conflict, he began to perceive violence as less degrading to those involved and less violent and offensive than he originally thought. Such modified perceptual and affective reactions were then generalized to judgments made about his targets.

As illustrated among these participants, habitual violence can lead to a transformation in the way individuals come to view confrontation. While violence was initially difficult to commit, individuals were able to develop an immunity and became desensitized to cognitive and emotional controls (e.g., fear, hesitation). This may be due to the realization that most fights do not create permanent physical damage or because of the sensual qualities they derive from fighting (e.g., adrenaline rush, feelings of victory). Analytically, the importance of this finding is evidence of behavioral desensitization and change toward violence over time. Although previous research in social psychology has found evidence that exposure to violent video games, television, music, and the internet can alter perceptual views of violent performances,[74] less research has focused on physiological and behavior changes that occur with routine exposure.[75] Our findings take an important step in examining the process through which violence can be normalized and the behavioral effects this can have in reducing the offensiveness and severity of interpersonal violence over time.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was twofold. First, we examined whether white supremacists experienced cognitive and emotional controls prior to violent confrontation and the techniques they utilized to suppress these feelings. In general, participants were able to overcome fear and hesitation by targeting vulnerable victims, adhering to an audience that encouraged violence, and utilizing clandestine attacks. Overall, these findings suggest that irrespective of their ideological convictions, white supremacists experience similar emotional and cognitive pressures toward interpersonal violence as non-extremists. Second, we elaborate on previous research regarding the micro-situational dynamics of violence.[76] In doing so, we illustrated that while participants were initially apprehensive toward violence, some individuals experienced a transformation in how they came to view fighting. For these participants, the habitual nature of extremist violence generated an immunity toward cognitive controls, thus desensitizing them to the psychological barriers associated with violence.

Previous studies suggest that extremist violence is fundamentally different from the broader realm of violent behavior because it is an overtly political act motivated by clear ideological commitments.[77] While radical ideologies are associated with extremist performances, the current study finds important commonalities between violent extremism and generic criminality.

Similar to non-extremists,[78] our participants often discussed broader cultural values surrounding extremist violence such as achieving masculinity, transforming the mundane, and accumulating symbolic capital (i.e., respect, fear). These findings also illustrate that, irrespective of the violent trajectory, extremists must overcome certain micro-conditions (e.g., fear) in order to provoke and channel racial violence—providing additional insight into research by Blee et al.[79]

Moreover, analogous to street gangs, our analyses revealed that participants used violence symbolically and instrumentally across a wide range of criminal activities such as drug and property crimes.[80] Such behavior served to reify boundaries and establish dominance over rivals. Finally, participants discussed the emotional rewards (i.e., “adrenaline fix”) and sensual characteristics that accompanied interpersonal violence, which has also been found among more conventional violent offenders.[81] Overall, these findings indicate that white supremacists, in many ways, resemble members of conventional street gangs and generic criminal offenders.

While there are similarities between the micro-conditions that spark extremist violence and violence in general, there are also important differences. For example, most participants in our sample belonged to a supportive audience that either approved of violent action or, in some cases, required violent performance. Non-extremists who engage in violence are less likely to be immersed in an environment with this level of support, and in some situations, may experience counter-balancing conditions that constrain their proclivities toward violent action (e.g., spouse or friend intervenes and de-escalates an argument). Although there are differences between non-extremist violent offenders and violent extremists, such differences become less apparent when comparing violent extremists to members of prison and street gangs or various types of organized criminal networks.

These findings have important implications for both terrorism researchers and scholars who study more conventional criminal activity. Given the parallels between extremist violence and the broader realm of violent behavior, terrorism scholars should continue leveraging advancements made in the field of criminology. In particular, developmental and life-course theory is well suited to examine a variety of internal (e.g., need for belonging) and external factors (e.g., childhood adversity, economic distress) that occur prior to becoming an extremist and how these experiences influence a person’s willingness to employ violent action following membership. At the same time, criminologists should revisit longstanding assumptions that conceptualize extremism and terrorism as fundamentally distinct from conventional crime. Doing so will provide important opportunities for criminologists to expand the scope of various theoretical frameworks and further clarify the understanding of several important substantive issues such as the intergenerational transmission of antisocial beliefs/values, the onset of offender trajectories, and patterns of criminal desistance and recidivism.

Acknowledgement:

This project was supported by Award No: 2014-ZA-BX-0005, the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, and the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) project, “Recruitment and Radicalization among US Far-Right Terrorists” as well as the Department of Homeland Science and Technology Directorate’s Office of University Programs through Award Number 2012-ST-061-CS0001, Center for the Study of Terrorism and Behavior (CSTAB) 2.1 made to START to investigate the understanding and countering of terrorism within the U.S. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, START, or the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation.

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Patterns of Fatal Extreme-Right Crime in the United States

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Abstract

This article examines ideologically motivated extreme-right fatal attacks in the United States since 1990. Aligning with this Special Issue's theme, our discussion centers exclusively on the unique threats posed by the extreme-right. We first define the American extreme-right movement and provide a brief review of the major data sources that are available to study extreme-right violence in the U.S. Subsequently, we review the growing number of studies that provide spatial, temporal, and other findings on the incident, offender, and victim levels for ideologically motivated extreme-right homicides. We conclude by outlining the implications of our findings and note directions for future research.

Key Words: American Terrorism; Extreme-Right Violence; Extremist Crime Database; Extreme Right Homicides

Introduction

This article examines ideologically motivated extreme-right fatal attacks in the United States since 1990. We discuss key incident, offender and victim characteristics of homicides, particularly spatial and temporal patterns. Importantly, we identify how these findings engage with existing theory and gaps in the relevant literature. The need for better data and how future research can begin to overcome this particular limitation is addressed. We limit our focus to the extreme-right because the correlates of spatial variation in attack location, temporal patterns, victim and target attributes, weapon types, and other factors often differ, depending upon terrorist ideology.[1] For example, Freilich et al. have found that extreme-rightists are “older, and more likely to be male, religious, poorer and less educated and to operate in rural areas in the U.S. compared to far-left terrorists.”[2] We also center our discussion exclusively on the unique threats posed by the extreme-right to align with the theme of the Special Issue.

The American extreme-right has consistently been one of the top threats to public safety over the last 50 years. Conversely, the levels of activity of both the far-left and radical Islamist (or jihadist) have fluctuated. Smith's foundational study on terrorism in the U.S. demonstrated that the extreme-right was active in the 1960s, 1970s, and in fact, was the most deadly movement operating in the 1980s.[3] Jihadists committed almost no deadly strikes prior to 1990 before increasing their level of violence that resulted in the horrific 9/11 attacks in 2001 and over 15 fatal incidents in the United States in 2002.[4] Though the far-left was very active in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the movement's level of deadly activities fell in the 1990s and 2000s, before reemerging in the last four or so years.[5, 6]

The extreme-right's level of fatal attacks, however, has remained mostly stable throughout this period of more than 50 years and law enforcement has invariably rated them a strong threat to public safety.[7] Research has also found extreme-right presence in most states.[8] Freilich et al.'s survey of American state police agencies showed that almost all agencies rated jihadists as the top national security threat, but the extreme-right was also seen as posing a significant danger.[9] Carter et al. subsequently discovered a wide variation in which groups are perceived to be a serious terrorist threat.[10] Law enforcement was much more concerned about extreme-right sovereign citizens, Islamist extremists, and extreme-right militia/patriot group members. This study also found that the major concerns of law enforcement have changed considerably over time. In the early to mid-2000s, the main concern was Islamist extremists. In 2013 and 2014, findings revealed that law enforcement's top concern was extreme-right sovereign citizens.

In his study of modern terrorism, Hewitt found that the extreme-right claimed over 250 lives between 1978 and 2000.[11] Our own research based on the U.S. Extremist Crime Database (ECDB) has shown that while jihadists have committed over 50 ideologically motivated homicide incidents that claimed over 3,000 lives since 1990, extreme-rightists in that same period committed over 210 ideologically motivated homicide events that took over 450 lives.[12] Thus, jihadists claimed more victims, while the extreme-right committed more attacks. This pattern has continued. For example, in 2017, extreme-rightists committed eight fatal attacks (claiming nine lives), while jihadists executed five deadly attacks (taking 17 lives) and far-leftists committed four fatal incidents (resulting in seven deaths).[13]

Despite the frequency of extreme-right violence, the majority of terrorism studies examine jihadists, both international and homegrown, including Al Qaeda and ISIS supporters and other foreign terrorist campaigns (e.g., IRA, ETA, etc.).[14] In addition, many studies of America's extreme-right crimes have relied on anecdotal or case study analyses with data and method limitations. Most of the frequently cited works on the crimes of the extreme-right continue to be written by journalists.[15]

The extreme-right tends to target specific categories of people and pose a special danger to law enforcement and government officials. Since 1990, extreme-rightists have killed almost 50 police officers in the line of duty. For instance, in 2014 a zealously extreme-right and anti-government husband and wife assassinated two Las Vegas police officers. Nonetheless, the largest category of extreme-right homicide victims has been racial and ethnic minorities, typically African Americans and Latinos.[16] One example is the massacre in an African American Church in South Carolina in June 2015 that took the lives of nine congregants. President Obama, America's first African American President, was the target of numerous plots by neo-Nazis, skinheads, and others to assassinate him during his term in office.

The following section begins by defining the American extreme-right movement. We then provide a brief review of the major data sources available to study extreme-right violence in the U.S. Subsequently, we review the growing number of studies that have relied on the ECDB to provide spatial, temporal, and other findings on the incident, offender, and victim levels for ideologically motivated extreme-right homicides. We conclude by outlining the implications of our findings and suggest directions for future research.

Defining the American Extreme-Right

As is the case for defining terrorism more broadly, there is a wide variety of definitions used to describe right-wing extremism and there is no universally accepted definition. Mudde finds that "to the extent that a consensus of opinion among the scientists concerned with this field[exists], it is confined to the view that right-wing extremism is an ideology that people are free to fill in as they see fit." [17] We therefore draw upon our systematic review of studies published on the topic of right-wing extremism, including several studies offering typologies and definitions to operationalize extreme-right terrorism.[18] More specifically, we define

American extreme-rightists as:

"... fiercely nationalistic (as opposed to universal and international in orientation), anti-global, suspicious of centralized federal authority, reverent of individual liberty (especially their right to own guns, be free of taxes), believe in conspiracy theories that involve a grave threat to national sovereignty and/or personal liberty and a belief that one's personal and/or national "way of life" is under attack and is either already lost or that the threat is imminent (sometimes such beliefs are amorphous and vague, but for some the threat is from a specific ethnic, racial, or religious group), and a belief in the need to be prepared for an attack either by participating in, or supporting the need for, paramilitary preparations and training or survivalism. Importantly, the mainstream conservative movement and the mainstream Christian right are not included."

Of course, not every extreme-rightist adheres to all of these ideological tenets. While this definition may capture violent right-wing extremism in the U.S. since 1990, we also recognize that the broader extreme-right movement has evolved while the salience of some ideological beliefs has shifted over time.[19] It will be important to consider whether amendments to this definition are needed, for instance, to account for a growing infatuation with Russia and other foreign extreme-right governments. As anticipated by Kaplan and Bjorgo, we should be watchful of the extreme-right's romanticization of Putin's Russia and whether the movement's extreme nationalism is being overtaken by a more globalist preoccupation with race.[20]

Data Sources on American Extreme-Right Violence

The primary source of data for contextualizing extreme-right violence in the current study is the open source U.S. Extremist Crime Database (ECDB).[21] The ECDB has data on offenders, incidents, victims, and targets of domestic terrorism, including fatal attacks and failed and foiled plots by extreme-rightists. Cases are included in the database regardless of jurisdiction, encompassing federal, state, and non-tried cases. For a case to be included in the ECDB, two criteria must be satisfied. First, *behaviorally*, a homicide or plot must have been committed or attempted in the U.S. Second, *attitudinally*, at least one of the suspects must have committed the homicide or plot to further their extreme-right belief system.

Other publicly available sources provide information on extreme-right violence in the U.S., and we relied on these sources, among others, when creating the ECDB to identify cases. Three sources in particular, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the American Terrorism Study (ATS), and Hewitt's chronology utilize the FBI's terrorism definition or policies.[22] The FBI defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives." [23] FBI designated terrorism cases often include offenders engaged in more extended planning to attack the American government or society more broadly, and thus may exclude extreme-right attacks targeting racial or other social minorities, which are often triggered situationally by presented opportunities as opposed to long-term planning. Unlike designated terrorism cases, non-FBI investigated ideologically motivated attacks are not prosecuted federally, but are instead tried on the state level. While the FBI's approach is beneficial because it establishes boundaries, many extreme-right crimes are overlooked. Since the FBI has historically required that acts of terrorism be committed by groups, crimes committed by lone individuals unaffiliated with an organization have in the past been excluded from official lists of terrorism. This led Riley and Hoffman to conclude that the FBI's terrorism definition was too narrow. [24]

The ATS was created by pioneering terrorism researcher Brent Smith and has in the past been conducted in cooperation with the FBI's Terrorist Research and Analytical Center. The database includes federally indicted persons as a result of an FBI Counterterrorism Program investigation. Information collected primarily from federal indictments, trial transcripts, and docket information by the ATS has been used to answer important questions about the adjudication of terrorists as well as the temporal and geospatial patterns of terrorist behavior.[25] Though the ATS has publicly available data on federal terrorism ranging from the late 1970s to 2017 that are formatted for statistical use, state-level extreme-right terrorism cases are excluded from the database. Terrorism researcher Christopher Hewitt created his chronology of American terrorism since the 1950s, combining information from multiple sources, including other chronologies, the FBI's annual reports, watch groups, and journalists.[26] Unfortunately, the FBI ceased publishing its annual *Terrorism in the United States* reports in 2005, and Hewitt's chronology ends in 2004. Further, the FBI reports and Hewitt's chronology are narratives not formatted for statistical analysis.

Another prominent source of terrorism data, known as the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), tracks terrorism events worldwide. LaFree and Dugan created the GTD from the Pinkerton Global Intelligence Services (PGIS) data that relied on wire services, U.S. and foreign government reporting, newspapers, and other information from PGIS offices and clients.[27] The GTD is publicly available and is formatted for statistical use. Scholars interested in American terrorism could extract these cases, and it is possible to focus specifically on American

extreme-right violence by limiting the data to just those cases.[28, 29] However, the GTD also excludes many extreme-right ideologically motivated attacks, such as those resulting from presented opportunities (e.g., skinhead spontaneously murders an African American) as opposed to pre-planned strikes.[30]

Domestic extremism watch-groups also provide information on right-wing extremism in the U.S. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), and the Rick Ross site, for example, publish chronologies on extreme-right violence. These reports are sometimes broad, including non-ideologically motivated cases, are in narrative format, and are freely accessible to the public on an ad hoc basis. Since the ADL and SPLC publish the reports to further their watch-group roles, some have criticized them for bias and utility as a sole source of information on domestic extremism.[31]

Another source of open source terrorism data known as the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) includes information on a sample of radicalized persons in the U.S.[32] It includes extreme-rightists as well as jihadists, far-leftists, and single issue extremists. Like the ECDB, PIRUS captures basic demography, and includes violent and non-violent perpetrators. PIRUS also captures key risk factors. Unlike the ECDB, PIRUS is limited to individuals and does not possess incident-level data. It has recently become publicly available.

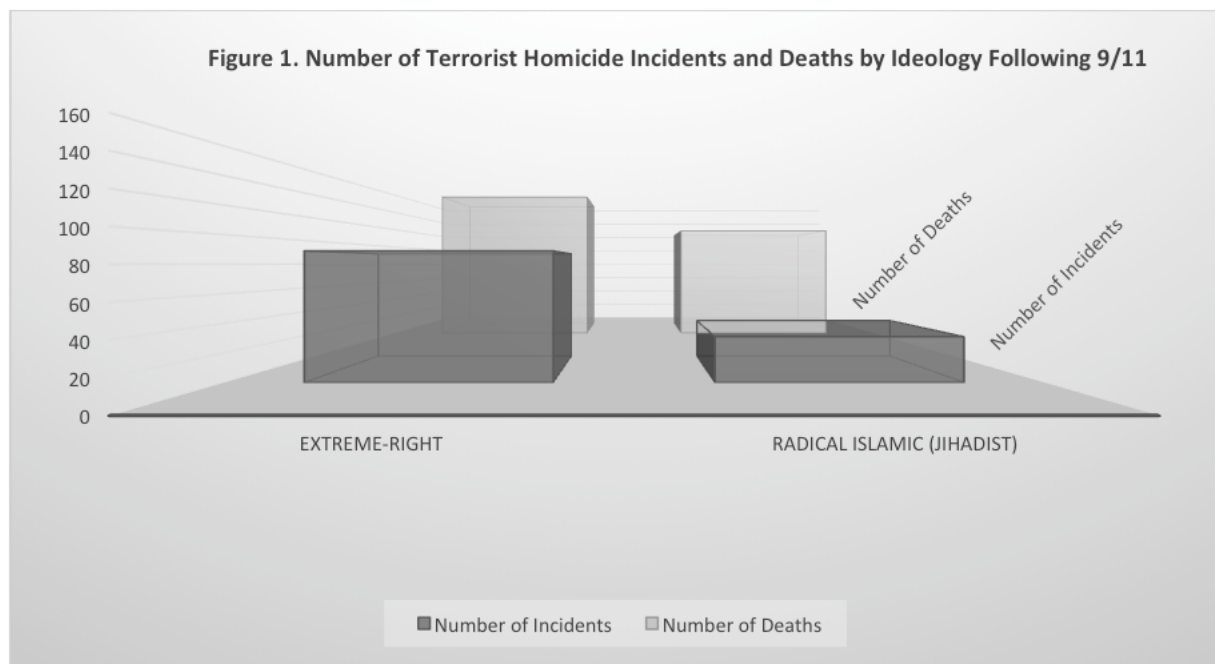
Extreme-Right Homicides in the United States

While the most visible manifestation of extreme-right activities include rallies and various online activities, deadly violence targeting social minorities and government actors remains the most public of their criminal activities in the U.S. Though studies of extreme-right crime and terrorism are not new, what is known about extreme-right homicides has increased over the last decade due to a series of empirical studies that analyze data from the ECDB.[33, 34] Our review turns to this growing body of research, focusing on key attributes of situational contexts, offenders, and victims of ideologically motivated, fatal extreme-right violence.

Temporal and Geospatial Context of Extreme-Right Homicides

Studies have shown that homicides committed by extreme-rightists in the U.S. have occurred every year since 1990 when the ECDB began tracking these events, significantly outnumbering attacks perpetrated by other terrorist movements.[35] As shown in Figure 1, extreme-right terrorists killed 158 people in 89 homicides between September 12, 2001 and 2016, while jihadists killed 119 people in 31 homicides in the U.S. during the same time period.[36]

Over the last three decades there have been, on average, nearly eight extreme-right homicides per year. If we exclude the single most deadly extreme-right attack, the Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 victims in 1995, an average of approximately 11 victims have been killed in these ideologically motivated extreme-right homicides every year. Despite reports of elevated extreme-right activity in the U.S. around the election of President Donald Trump, data reveal nine deaths in eight homicides in 2017.[37, 38] Though average, this figure represents a 100 percent increase from 2016; the same increase was observed during President Barack Obama's first year in office.



Prior research has also examined where violent extreme-right homicides tend to occur. ECDB data indicate that the highly populous states of California, Texas, and Florida were the top three states in terms of the number of ideologically motivated homicides.[39] Smith's foundational study of domestic terrorism discovered that extreme-right American terrorism is a relatively more rural phenomenon compared to other forms of terrorism.[40] More recent research has found that extreme-right homicides occur more often in the Western and Southern regions of the U.S., and in relatively more rural counties in comparison to left-wing and jihadi terrorism.[41] Counties harboring known hate groups are also significantly more likely to experience extreme-right homicides.[42] At the municipal level, Gruenewald and Pridemore found that just over 50 percent of extreme-right homicides occurred in small towns and mid-sized cities with total populations of less than 100,000.[43] As for situational attributes, research by Parkin et al. showed that the most frequent places where these homicides occurred include businesses, churches, and schools (29%), private residences (25%), remote areas (21%), and in open streets (21%).[44]

Extreme-Right Homicide Incident Attributes

Since the early 1990s, extreme-right leaders have advocated for "leaderless resistance," or the creation of covert and independent cells absent any hierarchical command and control structure.[45] The operational advantages of this organizational model are that it allows for extreme-rightists to commit crimes upon their own volition without the need for communication, within and between groups, which may be intercepted by law enforcement. Leaderless resistance also protects the movement from group infiltrators, including government informants.

Prior research has used ECDB data to examine co-offending patterns of extreme-right homicide offenders, with Gruenewald and Pridemore finding that approximately 50 percent of extreme-right homicides between 1990 and 2008 involved multiple offenders, significantly more than the average homicide in the U.S. during that time period (11%).[46] Other research examining lone actor terrorism by Gruenewald, Chermak and Freilich found that extreme-right homicides involving single offenders could be categorized into attacks perpetrated by *loners* who have no extremist group affiliations and operate alone (41%), *lone wolves* who have extremist group affiliations yet operate alone (27%), and *wolf packs* who have extremist group affiliations and choose to operate with one or two others (32%).[47] They also found differences between the various categories of extreme-right lone actors who commit homicide. While loners disproportionately select targets that include abortion providers and government officials, wolf packs more commonly target homeless persons and sexual orientation and gender identity minorities. While extreme-right loner attacks have remained stable over time, lone wolf and wolf pack attacks have decreased since the 1990s. A follow-up study by Gruenewald, Chermak, and Freilich compared

unaffiliated loners to other extreme-right homicide offenders, finding that loners were older, significantly more likely to be single (including separation or divorce), more likely to have a prior military background, more suicidal, more likely to target multiple victims, and generally less involved in the broader extreme-right movement.[48]

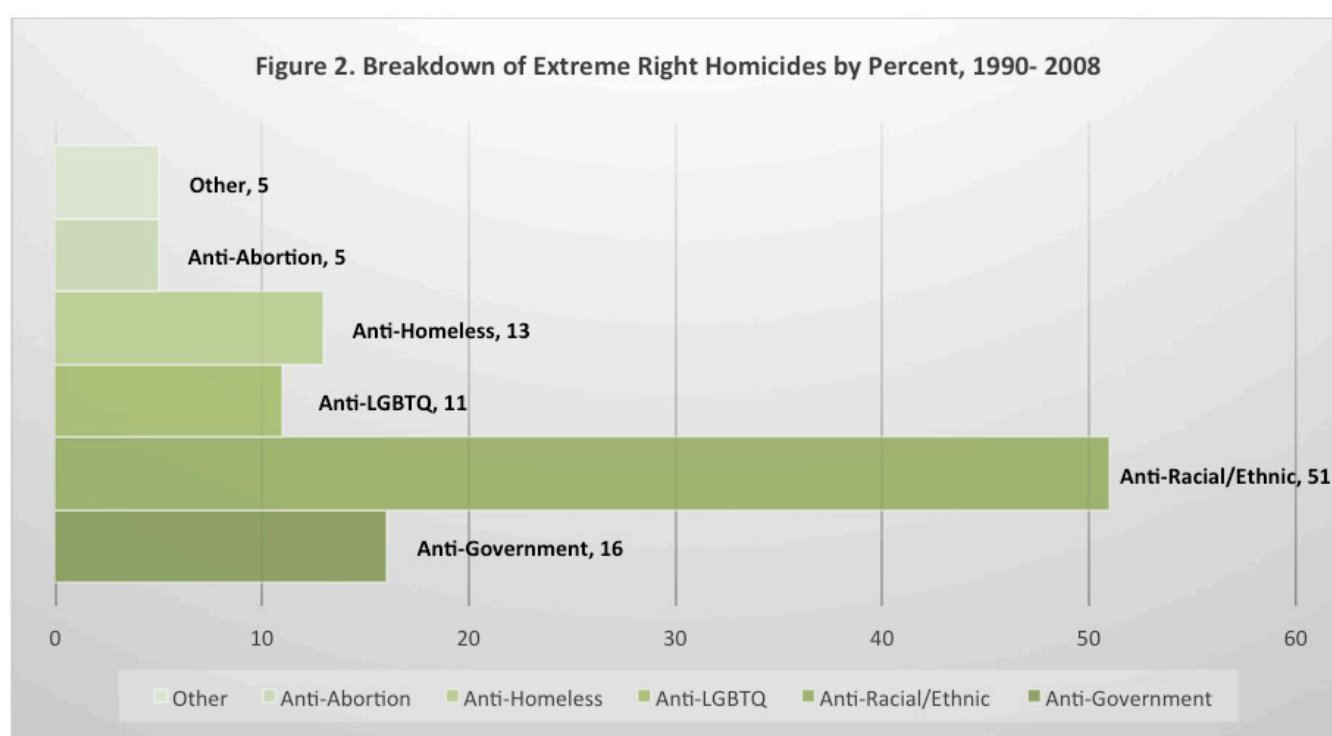
Only a minority of extreme-right homicides involve multiple casualties. Nonetheless, Gruenewald and Pridemore found that 16 percent of extreme-right homicides involved multiple victims between 1990 and 2008, concluding that multiple victimization was significantly more common in extremist homicide than the average homicide (4%) in the U.S.[49] During this time period, research found that the most common targets of ideologically motivated extreme-right homicides included racial and ethnic minorities (51%), government representatives (16%), homeless persons (13%), and the LGBTQ community (11%) (see Figure 2).[50]

In addition, Parkin et al. found that nearly 30 percent of extreme-right homicides involve non-fatal victimization. [51] Whom extreme-rightists choose to target also varies significantly from the average homicide, with up to 80 percent of ideologically motivated extreme-rightists targeting persons previously unknown to them.[52] Recent examinations of ECDB data report that fewer extreme-right homicides target strangers (66%), though this is likely due to an inclusion of non-primary offenders in the analysis. Regardless, extreme-right homicides, like other forms of terrorism, are distinguishable from typical forms of lethal violence that usually involve victims who are friends, acquaintances, and persons otherwise known to offenders.

Recent analyses of ECDB data suggest that over 50 percent of extreme-right violence ending in death is firearm-related. Again, weapon use by extreme-rightists significantly varies from the average homicide. Gruenewald and Pridemore found that, between 1990 and 2008, approximately 53 percent of ideologically motivated extreme-right homicides were perpetrated with guns in comparison to 73 percent of all homicides, generally.[53]

Extreme-Right Homicide Offender Attributes

Extreme-right homicide offenders are overwhelmingly white males who adhere to beliefs of white supremacy (approximately 80%). Though over half of all homicide offenders in the U.S. are non-white, comparative analyses of ECDB data have found that approximately 98 percent of extreme-right homicide perpetrators are white.[54] Prior studies have also shown that federally indicted far-right terrorists tend to be slightly older than other types of domestic terrorists.[55] Likewise, ideologically motivated extreme-right homicide offenders average about 30 years of age, which does not significantly differ from the average homicide offender.[56]



Recent research on extreme-right homicide also sheds light on the backgrounds of offenders beyond demographic characteristics. Supporting prior research on far-right terrorism, analyses of ECDB data reveal that extreme-right homicide offenders are less educated than eco-terrorists and religious terrorists.[57] More specifically, ECDB data show that only 24 percent of extreme-right homicide offenders have some college education, compared to 45 percent of jihadi terrorists and 77 percent of eco-terrorists in the U.S.[58] In addition, about 25 percent of extreme-right homicide offenders are married, which is comparable to other terrorist offenders in the U.S. In regard to criminal behavior, over half of extreme-right homicide offenders have prior arrest records, and are significantly more likely to have criminal histories compared to other types of domestic terrorists (i.e. eco-terrorists, jihadi terrorists).

Extreme-Right Homicide Victim Attributes

The ECDB also collects information on the victims of extreme-right homicides, who have also been the focus of previous research. Like extreme-right homicide offenders, victims of these violent attacks are overwhelmingly male (90%), more so than the typical homicide victim in the U.S., though this finding does vary by type of victim.[59, 60] Unlike extreme-right homicide offenders, less than 50 percent of extreme-right victims are white, significantly less than the typical homicide victims in the U.S.[61] This aligns with findings that racial and ethnic minorities have been the most frequently targeted victims of extreme-rightists over the past several decades.[62] The racial statuses of extreme-right homicide victims do, however, vary by type of attack, as nearly 90 percent of government-related targets were white and all abortion-related targets were white. In regard to age, victims of extreme-right homicide are on average 37 years old, somewhat older than the typical homicide victim in the U.S.[63]

Law enforcement victims of extreme-right homicide have received increased attention by media and researchers alike.[64] Using data from the ECDB, a study by Gruenewald, Dooley, Suttmoeller, Freilich, and Chermak examined 30 cases of law enforcement officers who were killed by extreme-rightists between 1990 and 2014. [65] Most officers were employed by state and local police agencies and all were intentionally targeted and killed in the line of duty. Attacks were the result of routine police work with over 90 percent of law enforcement ultimately dying of gunshot wounds. Officers were attacked most often by surprise, without any observable warning signs of danger. The circumstances in which police officers have been killed by extreme-rightists in the U.S. include situations of avoiding arrest, defending property, defending family, and anti-law enforcement mission offenses. Extreme-right homicides involving law enforcement victims compare differently when juxtaposed with other types of fatal extreme-right attacks. For instance, the majority of officers were killed by anti-government extremists (63%), such as sovereign citizens, as opposed to white supremacists. Police officers killed by extreme-rightists were often targeted by offenders with known prior arrests for violent crimes, and nearly 40 percent of fatal anti-law enforcement attacks were committed by offenders who had previously made violent threats against government officials, including judges, police officers, and other public officials.

Discussion and Conclusion

Although research has already provided several important insights into the characteristics of far-right offending in the U.S., there is much work left to be done on this topic. In this section, we conclude our review with a few suggestions for future scholarship. First, researchers need to assess the nature of preparation for extreme-right offending to investigate how offenders learn how to commit their acts and how they acquire the necessary skills. We suspect that different types of terrorist acts require different knowledge bases and different expertise. So, how do offenders acquire this information, and from whom? Addressing such questions requires recognizing that becoming a terrorist is a social process. Therefore, future research should look to established theories such as social learning theory (SLT) and social network approaches to help explain the ideological and behavioral processes involved in radicalization toward violent terrorism.[66, 67] Rather than develop a general theory of radicalization, researchers should identify the unique structural positions and socialization processes of American extreme-right terrorists from those of foreign extreme-rightists and other types of terrorists[68]. Illuminating processes for learning about terrorism through planning and preparatory activities will inform

more nuanced, crime-specific counterterrorism programs and practices.

Second, research to date has primarily focused on violent crimes and related activities, but a better understanding of financial crimes and the relationships between violent and nonviolent crimes should be explored. Historically, terrorism databases have been limited to completed violent acts committed by non-state actors. But, in recent years, and armed with increased government funding, scholars and others have expanded terrorism databases to include foiled plots, tracked non-terrorist, non-violent financial schemes, and created counter-terrorism databases chronicling government interventions against terrorism. These enhanced data collection efforts allow for the empirical investigations of heretofore unexplored questions, including some of these outlined here. The ECDB, for example, includes substantial information about non-violent offenders involved in financial schemes that are used to fund organizations and criminal acts. Future researchers should use these data to explore patterns in non-violent offending by extreme-rightists who subsequently commit terrorist attacks.

Third, our current investigation is limited to completed fatal strikes, but after the 9/11 terrorist attacks American law enforcement – including the FBI, state, and local police – placed great stress on identifying and thwarting terrorism in the U.S. The few studies looking at foiled plots have tended to examine jihadist plots, and no study to our knowledge has explored the spatial-temporal, incident, and offender attributes of unsuccessful extreme-right terrorism in the U.S. As noted, previous research has also been undermined by the difficulty in obtaining official data on extreme-right foiled plots. In effect, social scientists and practitioners have much to gain in learning from the characteristics of planned and unsuccessful extreme-right attacks. Situational crime prevention and proactive policing strategies, for instance, have increasingly been used to combat terrorism. Scholars could test the efficacy of these approaches by examining whether they are more likely to have been used in foiled terrorism incidents compared to successful/completed attacks. These analyses may provide important insights into what counter-terrorism methods and policies are most effective in keeping the nation safe.[69]

Fourth, while a significant amount of research has been done to reveal how extreme-right homicide offenders are similar to, and different from, other extremists, we must not lose sight that only a relatively small portion of extreme-rightists ever turn to violence. It is therefore critical for future research to move beyond simply providing descriptive findings and to test theoretically derived hypotheses about why some extremists radicalize to violence, while the vast majority do not; and why some places are more likely to experience extreme-right violence.

As one explanatory approach, researchers could assume that all extreme-rightists are rational actors and that certain situational circumstances are simply more conducive to committing violence than others. Recent studies of violent hate crime using open-source data can provide direction for applying tenets of environmental criminology and interactionist perspectives to understand how certain sets of conditions influence extreme-rightists to view violence as an appropriate response to their situated circumstances.[70, 71, 72] Conceptualizing extreme-right violence as criminal events unfolding over time and space could allow researchers to build theories about how dynamic interactions between extremists and their surroundings lead to violence, and to test theories about what situational factors are most important for situationally inducing violence.[73]

Others have in the past applied Social Identity Theory to hate crimes against perceived others, or members of out-groups, committed in defense of offenders' social groups (or in-groups).[74, 75] This perspective could be more directly applied to forms of extreme-right violence. In one study, for instance, Glaser, Dixit, and Green interviewed participants of extremist online forums and found that participants were more likely to advocate violence when threats were made against their racial group (e.g., interracial marriage).[76] Because social identity theory does not explicitly explain why only a small number of individuals who adhere to extreme-right beliefs progress toward violence, Allison advocates for applying identity fusion theory to bias-motivated violence.[77, 78] This theory suggests that it is not only perceived threats to a salient group identity that leads to extreme violence, but defensive violence is more likely when an offender's personal identity is strongly fused with group identity. Such highly fused individuals are unique in that they feel a visceral oneness with their dominant social identity status and fellow social group members, maintaining an enhanced sense of duty to

defend both their self and social group from perceived threats. In this way, identity fusion theory could help to explain why relatively few extreme-rightists elevate to the level of commitment required to perpetrate violence, and why some offenders are triggered to commit violence by both personal and social attacks.

Future researchers may also want to apply Sampson and Laub's developmental social control theory to extreme-rightists who commit violence and those who do not as a way to better understand how certain turning points along an extremist's trajectory might lead to, or away from, violent offending.[79] This perspective provides a set of constructs that could be adapted and allow for empirical tests of hypotheses about the onset, persistence, maintenance, and desistance from offending. For instance, researchers could test whether theoretically relevant turning points, such as changes in marital status, military involvement, and employment status, are more or less likely to lead extreme-rightists to commit ideologically motivated violence. While collecting life history data from interviews with violent and non-extremists would be ideal for this type of research,[80] open-source data may also be used to attain background information on social patterns over life course trajectories.

Researchers should also extend scholarship on the extreme-right by applying macro-level theories to where extremist violence is more likely to occur. Cross-nationally, some studies find an inverse relationship between factors such as economic prosperity and terrorism, while Krueger and Maleckova and others have found little direct relationship between them.[80, 81] State and community-level findings regarding the effects of socio-economic conditions on terrorism are also mixed. Although some prior studies have found that states with higher levels of social disorganization (e.g. in the form of unemployment) are more likely to experience hate crime, others have found that more organized and affluent communities experience higher levels of hate crime.[82, 83] More relevant to the current research, one previous study by Freilich et al., tested the applicability of several macro-level theories, including relative deprivation and social disorganization, for explaining where extreme-right homicide is more likely to occur.[84] While finding similarities in the county-level correlates of extreme-right homicide and regular (non-extremist) homicide, they also found that different causal mechanism were responsible for explaining where these two forms of violence were more likely to occur. For a more refined understanding of where extreme-right crimes are expected to occur, future research needs to extend macro-level explanations beyond homicide to include non-violent crimes (e.g., financial schemes) and non-criminal extremist activities (e.g. protests).

Funding Acknowledgment:

This research was funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate's University Program Division; and the Resilient Systems Division both directly and through the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). Funding was also provided by a grant from John Jay College's Office of Advancement of Research. The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the official policies, either expressed or implied, of DHS, START or John Jay College.

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Explaining the Spontaneous Nature of Far-Right Violence in the United States

by Matthew M. Sweeney and Arie Perliger

Abstract

Racist, Anti-Federalist, and Christian Fundamentalist ideologies drive adherents of the American Far Right. Terrorists like Timothy McVeigh and Dylan Roof exemplify the damage, to property and life, caused by planned, calculated acts of terrorism motivated by far-right sentiments. Nevertheless, a growing number of American Far Right ideologically motivated attacks occur spontaneously and without premeditation. The stabbing to death of Richard Collins III by Sean Christopher Urbanski at the University of Maryland is a case in point, as it occurred without warning and no evidence suggests the victim or offender knew each other. This murder and similar incidents drive us to question what drives affiliates of American Far Right groups to commit spontaneous, unplanned attacks? More specifically, we develop a theoretical framework that strives to explain how personality traits and the characteristics of the offender's community, may facilitate such incidents. To test our theoretical framework, we utilize a dataset of 1,000 spontaneous far-right attacks between 1990-2012 as well as a dataset of a control group of approximately 300 planned attacks driven by adherents of the American Far Right. We find that locations undergoing demographic diversification, related to 'other' racial categories, and which have an increasing median individual income, will have a higher chance of spontaneous attacks. Coincidentally, spontaneous perpetrators are less socially connected to their community than planned perpetrators. We argue spontaneous perpetrators react spontaneously because they observe their community changing and react criminally without an element of planning.

Keywords: American far right, hate crime, spontaneous terrorism, violence, national security

Introduction

Richard Collins and Sean Urbanski never met before May 20, 2017. Around 3:00 AM that day, Collins was waiting with two other friends for an Uber driver at a bus stop located on the campus of the University of Maryland. He had good reasons to celebrate with his friends. He had just been commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army and was supposed to graduate from Bowie State University a few days later. When Urbanski, a student at the University of Maryland, arrived at the vicinity of the bus stop and noticed Collins, he approached Collins while shouting "step left, step left if you know what's best for you." [1] After Collins simply replied "No," Urbanski responded by stabbing Collins to death and then fleeing from the scene. The subsequent police investigation revealed that the targeting of Collins was probably not arbitrary. Sean Urbanski was an active member of a Facebook group titled "Alt-Reich: Nation," hence the fact that Collins was an African American seems to be one of the motivating factors for Urbanski's unprovoked violent behavior. [2] A few days later, on May 26, Jeremy Joseph Christian noticed two young African American women, one of whom was Muslim and wore a headscarf, onboard a train in Portland, Oregon. Christian began to target offensive and racist language at the two young women. Three men intervened, telling Christian to stop. At that point, Christian stabbed the men, killing two of them. [3] Law enforcement later exposed that Joseph participated in at least one march of white supremacy activists, but he was not a member of a specific group.

The fatal events on the University of Maryland's campus and onboard a train in Portland were seen at the time as a part of a broader trend of the increase in far-right violence in the United States following the 2016 election of President Donald J. Trump. For example, the Anti-Defamation League reported an 86 percent rise in Anti-Semitic incidents in the first three months of 2017, and the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University at San Bernardino found that the number of hate crimes in major American cities increased by close to 20 percent during 2017. [4] Other aspects of these attacks received less attention. These

include the spontaneous behavior of the perpetrator and the fact that the attack was unplanned. Moreover, while Sean Urbanski was active in a racist Facebook group, there was no evidence that he participated in any actual activities related to far-right ideology before his attack on Collins. The characteristics of these attack are not so uncommon, at least when examining the data on far-right violence in the United States. Unlike some other ideological camps that engage in violent tactics, many attacks inspired by far-right ideology seem to be perpetrated without advanced planning and by perpetrators who are not associated with an active group or have a criminal or violent background.[5]

This is puzzling, as most of the literature that explores political violence and related processes of radicalization tend to introduce the engagement in political violence as the end-result of a fairly gradual process which consists of ideological radicalization, joining a militant group's activities, and only then progress to actual participation in pre-planned violent operations.[6] While there is some scholarship that addresses the spontaneity of some hate crime perpetrators, the work in this area focuses on rehabilitating the perpetrator rather than the characteristics of a spontaneous hate crime.[7] Therefore, it is not surprising that there is limited empirical exploration regarding the spontaneity of some of the far-right violence.

The current study aims to fill this gap by utilizing a unique dataset of perpetrators of attacks inspired by far-right ideology, as well as of the socio-demographic characteristics of the perpetrator's environment, to identify if specific personal socio-demographic traits, or socio-political environmental factors, facilitate the likelihood of spontaneous, unplanned attacks by individuals who have no previous connection with their victim or intention to commit violence in that situation. We define spontaneous incidents to include cases where there is no direct connection between the victim and perpetrator, the act occurred without premeditation or provocation, and the perpetrator did not acquire material solely to engage in the attack. We believe spontaneity should not prevent these incidents from being designated as acts of terrorism, even though they occur without premeditation, a common element in many definitions of terrorism. We argue that these cases exemplify the inherent goal of a terrorist, to promote political objectives by utilizing violence in order to generate fear and anxiety within a specific collective, regardless of the existence or absence of premeditation.

The next section will provide a brief overview of the current landscape of the American Far Right, as well as discuss operational characteristics of the violence produced by violent domestic sub-state groups in Western societies. Subsequently, we develop an analytical framework and relevant hypotheses. The last two sections elaborate on our data gathering procedures and methodological tools, as well as the theoretical and policy relevance of our findings.

Overview: The American Violent Far-Right

The American Far Right is highly diverse and fragmented. It is characterized by significant ideological diversity, organizational instability (frequent merges and splits), as well as in the exercise of various operational methods (distinct groups prefer to use different tactics against different types of targets).[8] Nonetheless, in the last few years, scholars were able to provide a fairly efficient conceptualization of the ideological boundaries of the American Far Right, as well as deciphering some of the dynamics that influence its level of popularity and operational characteristics.[9]

Most scholars agree that all American Far Right groups and movements manifest two ideological characteristics. [10] The first is "internal homogenization," which expresses the desire that all people who reside in the homeland will share similar primordial characteristics. In the American context, it is reflected specifically in the aspiration that all residents or citizens of the polity/community will share the same ethnic, religious, and national characteristics. Moreover, many American Far Right groups emphasize that contemporary social, economic, and political crises result from the inability of modern societies to implement this principle. For example, the Californian "Loyal White Knights," were involved recently in a violent protest that linked "soft" immigration policies with terrorism and street crime.[11] The second ideological component that all American Far Right groups share is "nativism," or the opposition to foreign influence. This includes the rejection of non-

native cultural, religious, and normative practices. In the American context, it is manifested by the presentation of holidays/costumes, social behaviors, art, linguistic phrases, musical themes, and other cultural expressions of immigrants as a threat to American identity and national cohesiveness.[12] In addition to these two consensual ideological components, some American Far Right groups also embrace xenophobic and racist sentiments, support exclusionist policies (the segregation between ethnic groups in various spheres of society such as the labor market or educational system) and promote nostalgic adoration of history and traditional values combined with aspiration for “strong” state and anti-democratic practices.[13]

Despite the ideological similarities, American Far Right groups differ in the mechanisms they use to justify their ideological views, and in the practices that they employ to promote them. These differences allowed scholars to develop a typology of the contemporary American Far Right, which includes three major categories.[14] The first includes various white supremacy groups and movements such as KKK associations, Neo-Nazi groups, and Skinheads organizations that advocate what they perceive as the appropriate and natural racial hierarchy. While the Skinheads are referred by some sociologists as a distinct sub-/counter-culture, in the context of this text we are focusing on the Racist Skinheads organizations which originated from this sub-culture.[15] The groups in this category promote practices and policies that supposed to ensure the privileged status of white people and their social control over (what they perceive as) lesser races, as well as oppose any policies that aim to increase racial or ethnic integration, provide other ethnic/racial groups more access to material and political capital, and generally promote greater cultural and demographic diversity. In recent years, white supremacist groups sought to connect these sentiments to contemporary political discourse; thus, these groups tend to be vocal in their opposition to multi-culturalism, illegal immigration, interracial marriage, black on white crime, Jewish (and other ethnic) influences in society and affirmative action.[16]

The second category includes anti-governmental groups such as Militias, Sovereign Citizens, and Anti-Taxation advocates.[17] Many of these groups promote conspiracy theories that are based on the general narrative that the US government, including its fundamental institutions, were already, or in the process of being, hijacked by external/foreign powers that are looking to promote a “New World Order,” (NWO) in which the United State will be merged into a global government.[18] In order to facilitate this NWO, they believe the government is interested in undermining the power of those who oppose it, by eroding constitutional rights related to civil liberties, and gun- and land-ownership. In the last two decades, scholars and journalists have written about the emergence of groups that completely reject the legitimacy of federal authorities and legislation (e.g. Sovereign Citizens), as well as groups such as the Oath Keepers and 3 Percenters (III percent) that try to espouse more mainstream image by promoting their ideas without relying on conspiracy theories, nonetheless display militant practices.[19]

Most scholars of political violence define violent religious organizations as collectives which utilize sacred texts for three major goals: to provide moral justification for their violent practices, to enhance the cohesiveness of the group, and to mobilize support.[20] The groups that are included in the last category, of fundamentalist groups, such as Christian Identity Churches, and anti-abortion associations, indeed utilize spurious religious heritage, symbols, rituals, and norms to popularize their beliefs and ideology, to ensure the loyalty of their followers, and to expand their influence.[21] They also use such a mechanism to produce a moral justification for activism against groups/communities/individuals whom they perceive as a threat. More specifically, Christian Identity groups’ interpretation of the holy texts argue that in contrast to the accepted convention, Aryans are the true chosen people, descendants of the Hebrew people, not those who identify as Jews.[22] Thus, Aryans enjoy superior qualities and attributes and should lead the nations of mankind. Moreover, the Identity narratives assert that a racial war between the white Anglo-Saxon nations and various non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic groups such as the “Children of Satan” (Jews) and “mud-people” (non-whites) is imminent and will reflect the ongoing struggle between forces of light and forces of evil, as described in various religious texts.[23] Hence, it is not surprising that Christian Identity groups are one of the most effective promoters of Anti-Semitic and racist propaganda. Similarly, a look at the Army of God’s Manual (Army of God is considered the most violent anti-abortion group in recent American history), which for many militant Anti-abortionist serves as an operational bible, will uncover that the entire rationalization and operational framework of the group was based on specific

interpretation of holy texts, mainly biblical verses.[24]

The ideological differences between the diverse types of groups are also reflected in the organizational structure and operationalization of the violence that these groups produce. For example, since the Militias and Christian Identity groups tend to adopt a fairly hierarchal structure, with significant internal disciplines and clear rules and practices of behaviors, it is very rare to see violent operations by members of these groups that are not pre-planned and include multiple perpetrators.[25] Similarly, the different ideological focus can explain the tendency of anti-government groups to aim their violence mainly towards representative or proxies of state and federal governments, while the traditional white supremacy groups aim most of their attacks against minorities and foreigners.[26] The less hierarchical and informal nature of many of the current white supremacy groups also explain why many of their members tend to engage in less sophisticated attacks, and also are overrepresented among those perpetrating spontaneous attacks. Lastly, the fundamentalist groups' violence is usually characterized by highly sophisticated operations that are perpetrated by factions of the organizations, or by members who act as lone wolves.[27]

Operational Practices

The growing focus of Jihadi groups on “inspiring” home-grown radicalized individuals to engage in mass casualty attacks, raised significant concerns among policymakers and academics. The latter devoted significant resources and efforts to decipher the processes that lead an individual to adopt radical views and engage in politically motivated violence. A review of models of radicalization that were developed by scholars in the last twenty years reveals that most have a similar structure, involving three general phases.[28]

(1) The first phase includes an increase in political awareness and political knowledge and efficacy (termed by Wiktorowicz “Cognitive Opening”). In this phase, the individual develops political and social perceptions related to his sense of political or social deprivation and the realization that the status quo is no longer satisfactory.[29] This situation triggers a search for viable answers to perceived injustices/deprivations. These answers, in many cases, are provided by close social networks or via personal exploration; (2) the second stage includes the growing affinity of the individual to a specific religious or ideological framework, that seems to provide answers/explanations for his perceived injustice or deprivation and provides a way to channel growing frustrations into political activism. This is manifested by growing interest in the activities of a specific group, increasing interest in the group's ideology, and the seeking of opportunities to become more politically active; (3) the third stage involves actually joining a militant group, further internalizing its ideology, and an increased willingness to engage in extreme activities, including violence.[30]

Some models are more detailed regarding their description of the indoctrination process, while others tend to make distinctions among stages that lead to involvement in actual violence. Moreover, the growing fragmentation of many of today's radical movements in some cases also led to the remission of the organizational recruitment stage (mainly relevant to cases of so-called inspired or lone wolves attacks).[31] Nonetheless, most follow the general path described above. What these models also share is a premise which is based on two fundamental assumptions. The first is that radicalization is a gradual process, and its various stages are manifested in behavioral changes; the second is that radicalization is associated with a social framework that involves joining a terrorist group or ideological movement/party that promotes violent practices.[32] However, as we indicated above, in some cases the radicalization process seems to take a quicker form which is less visible or rarely manifested in changes in the behavioral characteristics of the individual. It is also difficult in many such cases to identify an affiliation of the perpetrator to an ideological group. Hence, there is a need to explore the dynamics that lead to “spontaneous” attacks. In the next section, we elaborate on our analytical approach.

Analytical Framework

Spontaneous attacks that are politically motivated seem to contradict most accepted perceptions related to violent crimes and homicides. More specifically, the criminological literature indicates that most homicides are relatively spontaneous and a result of intense emotional state, the literature further indicates that in many cases they were precipitated by the victims, involve people who knew each other before and are mostly intra-racial. [33] Nevertheless, spontaneous far-right attacks seem to be rarely triggered by the victims' behavior; in most cases, these attacks do not include prior familiarity between the perpetrator and the victim and are also, for the most part, inter-racial.[34] These fundamental differences seem to establish that spontaneous attacks which are ideologically motivated, represent somewhat of a separate phenomenon than spontaneous crimes.

We structured our analytical frame around the literature of security studies and criminology. Previous work on terrorist perpetrators indicates that while many people will choose to join an organization, each person represents a unique identity, requiring the disaggregation of perpetrators at the individual level.[35] Furthermore, scholars have theorized about the impact of environmental conditions on criminality, especially on hate crime, where spatial and geographic conditions drive the characteristics of such crimes. However, the field has experienced a lack of quantitative analyses.[36] As a result, we wanted to find a way to combine both the environmental and perpetrator data to analyze spontaneity, relying partially on elements from social disorganization theory and situational action theory.[37]

We developed an analytical framework that tries to capture two primary sets of factors which may lead an individual to spontaneously engage in politically motivated violence. The first are various elements which relate to the socio-demographic background of the individual, as well as some aspects of his or her personality traits. Theories that imply an association between these two elements and the tendency of individuals to participate in acts of political violence or to join groups that exercise such violence are highly prominent in the literature. Numerous studies evaluated how socio-economic indicators such as social mobilization, educational background, occupational and immigration status may facilitate engagement in radical political activism, including terrorism and insurgency.[38] Some of these studies emphasize that access to political information and the human capital to understand and internalize this information is dependent on resources which are available to upper-class economic echelons such as free time, financial freedom, and robust social networks.[39] Thus, we should anticipate individuals with high levels of material and social capital (i.e. educated, employed, and non-immigrants) would be more inclined, on average, to join terrorist groups, than their less well educated, unemployed, or foreign-born peers. Other scholars argue that individuals from high socio-economic echelons (the educated, employed, and non-immigrants) have more to lose by engaging in costly political activism, whereas individuals with a lower socioeconomic status risk less when they engage in political activism and stand to gain the most from a change in the status quo.[40]

In the context of spontaneous political violence, we will test if socio-economic characteristics can discourage or incentivize specific attitudes that may lead to violence when a perpetrator meets someone deemed an existential enemy in a specific setting. More specifically, we can test how the socio-economic background of the perpetrator may facilitate (or discourage) violent manifestations of radical views. We chose to include a variety of variables including personal characteristics (marital status, age, gender, parental status, etc.), socio-economic status (education, employment, military history, criminal history, etc.), online/social media presence and its use as a source of ideological exploration, and factors regarding the perpetrator's criminal record, conviction, and imprisonment. Scholars have used these factors to a significant extent in criminological research and research on terrorist perpetrators.[41]

The second component of our analytical framework is focusing on the environment of the individual. Since the early 2000s, a growing number of scholars emphasized the role of the political, social, and economic characteristics of the individuals' close environment on his likelihood to join militant groups. Their studies assert that the individual's familiarity and emotional attachment to a specific normative and value-based framework is the main factor which facilitates his radicalization and willingness to engage in extreme acts of political activism. [42] Other scholars preferred to put more emphasis on the process in which the radicalization is catalyzed by

the individual's primary social networks, as well as the norms and practices that are being manifested by the community to which he belongs.[43] Considering the empirical support that this theoretical approach was able to obtain, and the fact that scholars of social violence traditionally emphasize that structural aspects of the environment can potentially facilitate violent crimes, it is important to test if there are environmental factors that can facilitate the tendency to engage in ideologically motivated unplanned attacks.

Methodology

Compilation of Research Population and Control Group

We used the Combating Terrorism Center's 2012 dataset on violent incidents and property crimes associated with adherents of American Far Right ideologies. The dataset includes over 4,400 incidents that occurred from 1990 to 2012 and in which the perpetrator(s) is/are a member(s) of American Far Right group(s) and/or were motivated by far-right ideology.[44] Multiple sources were used in order to compile the dataset, including the University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Dataset, the Southern Poverty Law Center's hate crime dataset, and reports from non-governmental organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League and the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism and Racism.[45] We compiled both our research sample and a control group from the dataset including violent and property offenses. We chose to include both types of incidents (property and violent) because, in this context, we argue vandalism is targeting a person or group of people for a religious, social, or political reason, which qualifies it as being considered a politically motivated crime. Further, some crimes are difficult to differentiate as violent or property, such as cross burnings, directed threats with hate symbols, and arsons.[46] The first set of cases includes incidents that occurred spontaneously and without previous direct provocation, while the second set includes cases in which there is evidence that the perpetrator planned the attack. Subsequently, we expanded the dataset by adding additional variables to gain a better comprehension of the perpetrator's characteristics and his environment. The authors coded the data with the help of a team of research assistants who identified the cases and coded relevant data. Additionally, the coding was cross-checked to ensure the validity and accuracy of both the primary sample and the control group.

The dataset of spontaneous attacks was compiled in two stages. First, we identified violent incidents based on three characteristics. First, the victim and the perpetrator had no prior contact or history, which would indicate that the victim and perpetrator knew one another. Second, the incident occurred without planning or known premeditation. The line between premeditation and spontaneity is difficult to discern given the limitation of using publicly available data. We chose to use a premeditation and deliberation standard. For example, first-degree homicide, or premeditated homicide is a killing of another person with malice and aforethought, in which the perpetrator planned and deliberated the attack before contact with the victim. Comparatively, second-degree homicide includes malice and aforethought, but there is no deliberation or premeditation before the interaction between the victim and the perpetrator.[47] For spontaneity, the interaction between victim and perpetrator occurred during the perpetrator's and victim's routine activities where neither the perpetrator nor the victim intended to have contact with the other before their encounter. Third, the perpetrator relied on an immediate context to act (for example, the victim's skin color, ethnic affiliation, language, or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity). This immediate context indicates a desire for immediate satisfaction and impulsive behavior, which does not include premeditation and deliberation because the behavior occurs without prior deliberation regarding the victim.[48] These criteria were validated in prior research on hate crimes that identifies the spontaneity of hate-motivated crime, in which a perpetrator experiences a 'trigger' that results in an unplanned hate crime against a victim.[49] Furthermore, Koehler discovered a similar phenomenon in Germany where citizens without links to extremism engaged in hate and extremist-motivated crime in 2015 and 2016.[50]

There are some potential limitations to correctly identifying spontaneity. First, the lack of publicly available information on some incidents may obscure the perpetrator's deliberation or premeditation. Additionally, one could argue that the engagement with ideological propaganda amounts to premeditation or at least prior

consideration for the engagement in violence. However, in the United States, terrorist propaganda is not illegal to possess, and the consumption of propaganda does not satisfy definitions of conspiracy or premeditation unless the perpetrator planned and deliberated a specific attack outside of the propaganda. As a result, we define spontaneity, regardless of the perpetrator's exposure to propaganda, by the context of the perpetrator's actions and statements, not by prior involvement in propaganda or extremist activity.

In the second stage, we excluded cases that met at least one of two exclusion criteria. The first criterion was cases in which the perpetrator acquired material to engage in the attack, whereby the material was independent of other uses. For example, if a perpetrator constructed a cross, transported it, erected it, and set it on fire, the incident required planning, and thus we excluded this incident from the dataset because the perpetrator acquired material to build a cross that had no other intended use. The second criterion for exclusion was if the perpetrator intended to commit an act of property crime or violence regardless of the victim. For example, if a perpetrator drove around seeking any 'minority' or 'minority-owned' property with the intent of attacking a person or property, we excluded this case because the offender planned the act, regardless of the victim or circumstance. For example, in hate crime literature 'gay bashing' or other types of thrill-seeking hate crimes, are an act in which individuals drive around seeking a racial minority member or members of the LGBTQ community to assault.[51] For our work, such an act amounts to a level of premeditation.

Subsequently, we retained the cases that met the inclusion criteria and did not meet the exclusion criteria as the dataset of spontaneous violent attacks. These criteria identified 1,193 spontaneous cases of violence. One example that exemplifies a spontaneous attack occurred in Central Park in New York City. A man observed two men sitting together on a blanket in the middle of the park. The men appeared as if they were involved with each other in a romantic relationship. The perpetrator approached the men and began yelling homophobic epithets before spitting on the men. Unfortunately for the perpetrator, the men were undercover New York City Police Officers monitoring the park for illegal activity. In this instance, the victims were unknown to the perpetrator before their interaction in the routine activity of being in Central Park at the same time. The perpetrator perceived their sexual orientation and acted without prior premeditation and deliberation to attack the men for his perception of their sexual orientation. While the perpetrator did intend to harass and assault the men, this level of deliberation only occurred upon 'trigger' in which the perpetrator witnessed the two men sitting together.

A similar process guided the compilation of the control group's dataset. We aimed to include cases that involved clear advanced planning, such as Timothy McVeigh's Oklahoma City bombing, the bombings by Eric Rudolph, Scott Roeder's shooting of George Tiller, and incidents like Dylan Roof's killing of nine African-Americans during a Bible study in the basement of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. With these cases in mind, we utilized two inclusion criteria: (a) the perpetrator took specific steps in preparation for the incident and (b) the intent of the act emerged before contact with the victim. If an attacker sought a person, ethnic group, or location with the intent of committing a crime, then the perpetrator engaged in some element of premeditation. In the control group, we identified cases where the perpetrator(s) engaged in premeditation and deliberation. For example, these incidents routinely included two types of cases. The first are incidents where law enforcement interrupted an attack in the planning stages, such as planned bombings by militia groups in the United States. The second include cases of planned, calculated violence such as the Oklahoma City bombing, where Timothy McVeigh built a bomb, rented a Ryder truck, and carefully placed the vehicle in a location so he could escape before the blast.

Independent Variables

We collected the data for the independent variables in two phases. In the first phase, we collected data about the characteristics of the locations of the incidents (i.e., environmental variables). Previous research indicates that environmental conditions in a location, particularly economic, political, and demographic factors influence a person's political ideology.[52] In particular, we included racial demographics and religious demographics since racial minorities and religious minorities are frequent targets of far-right violence in the United States. Additionally, we included economic variables because the literature on racist organizations shows that these

groups relied on economic insecurity to drive recruitment.[53]

In the data collection of the environmental data, we used the lowest level of analysis available for the location of the incident. We collected the data at the city/town level or when the incident occurred; in unincorporated areas we used data from the county level. We based our selection on the location identification from the initial dataset. The source of this variable data was primarily the United States Census Bureau. We collected the data for the year the incident occurred. If a location did not have data for the year the incident occurred, we drew the data from the closest decennial census. Therefore, for any incident year from 1991 to 1995, 2001 to 2005, and 2011 to 2012, that did not have data available, we drew data from 1990, 2000, and 2010, respectively. [54] Additional data was extracted from several other sources, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report[55] and the Association of Religion Data Archives' U.S. Congregational Membership reports.[56]

Furthermore some variables were only available at the county or state level. Due to variations in local politics and religious structures, we chose to measure these variables at the state and county level, respectively, because this is level at which the data is available for all locations and consistent between locations. Collecting political or religious data at the local level would prove problematic in a nationwide sample due to variations in collection practices and structures across the United States. Political structures vary widely at the local level, but every state, except for Nebraska, has a House of Representatives, a State Senate, and a State Governor. With such information, we could capture party affiliation, Republican, Democrat, or other, for data on the composition of these political offices. We admit the differing levels of analysis is a limitation, but we maintain consistency across every location, and every variable has the same measurement level, regardless of the case.

Overall, we coded 24 environmental variables (see Table 1). We separated the variables into demographics, local socio-economic factors, and city or town crime rates. The location's demographics include information about the population size and density, gendered distribution, family size, median age, and racial, ethnic, and religious composition.[57] The socio-economic variables include percentages of individual and family poverty, individual's median income, unemployment rate, and proportion of the location's population which completed high school and obtained a bachelor's degree. Crime rates include a measure of property crime and violent crime per 100,000 residents, calculated from the raw crime rates and the population figures reported by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In the second phase, we coded socio-demographic information about the perpetrators via open source information from media reports and court case files.[58] In some cases, the perpetrators were juveniles, and thus authorities released limited information about their identities and background. This information included only the juvenile's gender and age. In these circumstances, we coded each unknown juvenile perpetrator as an unknown juvenile and coded the remaining variables based on the publicly available information. We excluded cases where the number of perpetrators was never publicly named or known. Overall, we coded 50 variables related to the perpetrators. These include age, marital status, place of residence, location of birth, parental status, educational background, occupational background, military experience, mental illness' background, background of substance abuse, perpetrator's membership in hate or extremist groups and data related to the perpetrator's involvement in court cases (including convictions, trial information, and correctional sentences). We guided our variable selection based on the work of Perliger, Koehler-Derrick, and Pedahzur who identified demographic variables responsible for explaining the gap between organizational participation and the participation in terrorist violence.[59] Table 2 offers an overview of the variables used in this study.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Variables of Incident Locations

Variable	Variable Description	Data Source
Political Affiliation	Represents the control of each state legislature and Governor's office by Democrat, Republican, or Other.	United States Census Bureau, the National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association
Population	The total population of the city/town/county	United States Census Bureau
Population Density	The density of the city/town/county's population	United States Census Bureau
Racial Demographics	The percentage of the city that is White, Black, Hispanic, and Other.	United States Census Bureau
Poverty Statistics	The percent of the population living in individual and family poverty	United States Census Bureau
Religious Composition	The composition of the county for Catholics, Protestants, Jewish, and Other.	The Association for Religious Data Archives
Median Age	The median age of the city/town/county	United States Census Bureau
Crime Rates	The violent and property crime rates per 100,000 residents	The Federal Bureau of Investigation
Unemployment	The percent of the population that is characterized as unemployed	United States Census Bureau
Family Size	The average family size in the city/town/county	United States Census Bureau
Education Characteristics	The percent of the population that achieved a high school diploma or higher and the percent of the population that achieved a bachelor's degree or higher	United States Census Bureau
Gender Demographic	The percent of males and females in the city/town/county	United States Census Bureau
Median Income	The median individual income in the city/town/county	United States Census Bureau

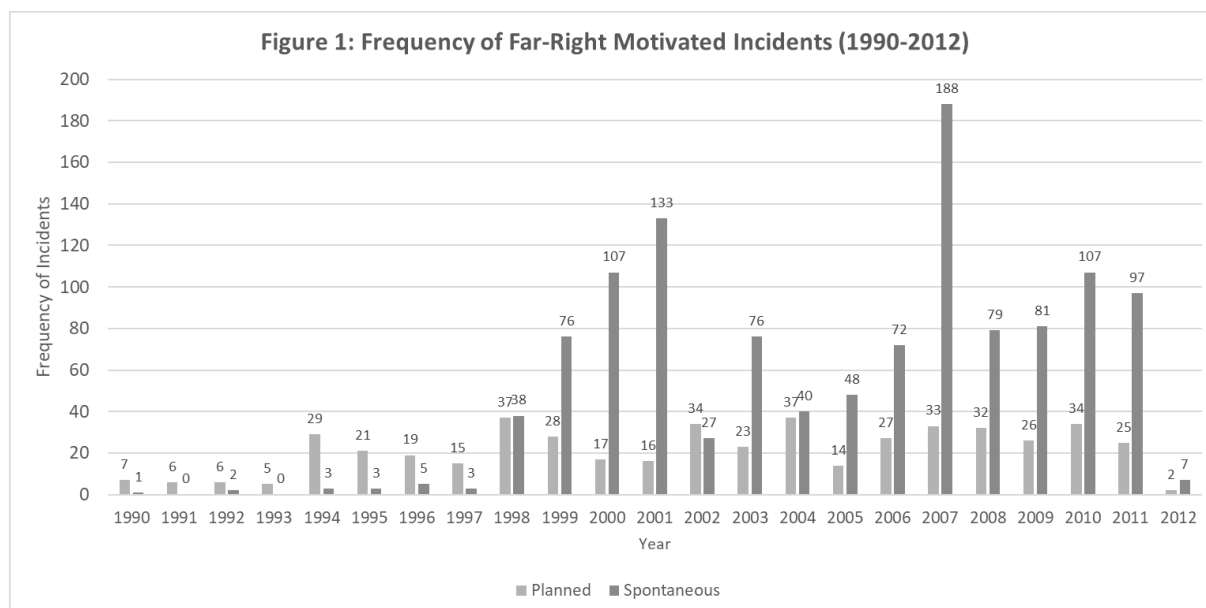
Table 2: Terrorist Offender Variable Descriptions

Variable	Description	Operationalization
Personal Demographics	Name	
	Age	
Family Demographics	Marital Status	Single/Unmarried/Divorced
		Partnered
		Married
	Biological Children	Yes No
Education Demographics	Highest Completed Educational Level	Did Not Complete High School
		High School Diploma/Equivalent
		Higher Education Degree/Certificate
Prior Legal Problems	Prior Incarceration	Yes
		No
Hate/Terrorist Group Status	Membership Status	Yes
		No
	Name of Hate/Terrorist Group	
Formal Criminal Case	Plea Agreement	Yes
		No
	Length of Sentence	

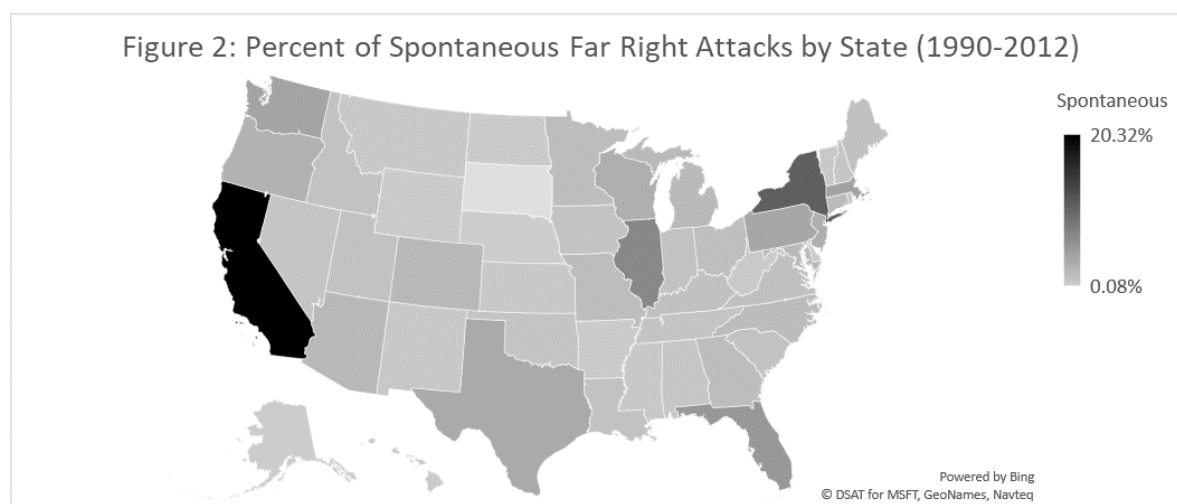
Results

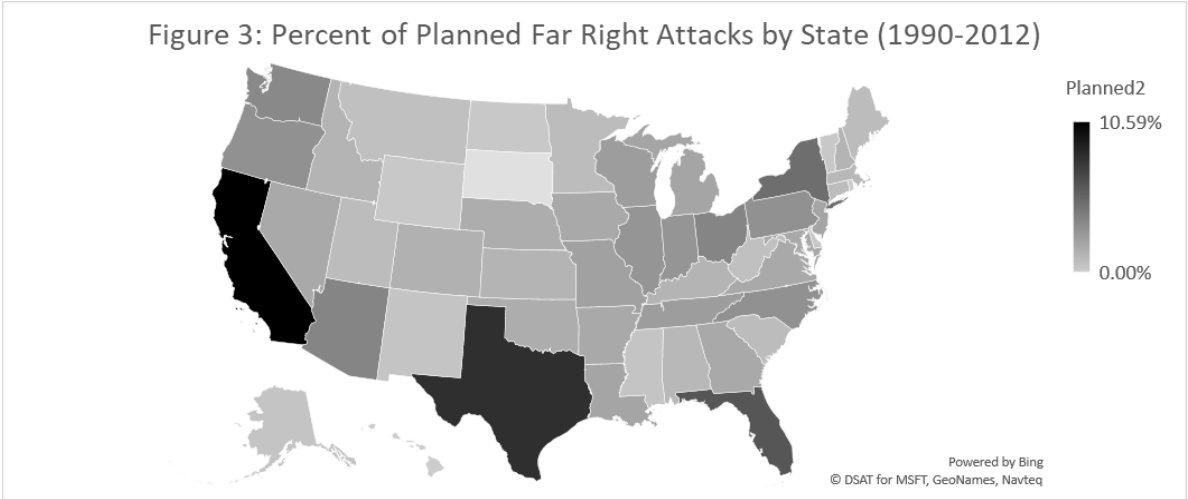
Summary Statistics

Our dataset includes 1,686 incidents,[60] which are divided between the research sample (1,193 cases that occurred spontaneously), and control groups (493 cases that the perpetrators planned). In the coding process, we coded the environmental and location data for 1,189 cases - 800 spontaneous attacks and 389 planned incidents. Following the coding of the environmental data, we coded perpetrator information for a total of 1,177 cases - 803 spontaneous incidents and 374 planned attacks. In this section, we will provide a broad overview of our data. Figure 1 depicts the year-to-year count of our data over the twenty-two-year period.



American Far Right activities does have some distinct geographic patterns. Figures 2 and 3 (below) are heat maps showing the prevalence of spontaneous and planned far-right incidents across the United States. Spontaneous and planned far-right activity occurs most frequently in California (20.3 percent), New York (10.7 percent) Illinois (6.7 percent) and Florida (5.21 percent). Also planned attacks seem to be more frequent in states with highly diverse populations, such as California (10.5 percent), Texas, (8.1 percent) and Florida (6.1 percent).





Overall, we identified 2,642 perpetrators in our dataset. They include 165 unknown juveniles (6.24 percent), 900 unknown adult perpetrators (34.07 percent), and 1,577 known perpetrators (56.69 percent). The total number of spontaneous perpetrators is 1,908. Spontaneous perpetrators include 117 unknown juveniles (6.13 percent), 804 unknown individuals (42.14 percent), and 987 known perpetrators (51.73 percent). Spontaneous far-right activity averages 2.376 perpetrators per incident. Our control group of planned attacks comprises 734 perpetrators, which includes 48 unknown juveniles (6.54 percent), 96 unknown adult individuals (13.08 percent), and 590 known perpetrators (80.38 percent). Planned criminal attacks attributed to far-right ideologies and ideological groups average 1.963 perpetrators per incident (see Table 3).

Table 3: Perpetrator Information

	Total Number	Unknown Juveniles	Unknown	Known	Average Perpetrators Per Case
Spontaneous	1908	117	804	987	2.376
Planned	734	48	96	590	1.963
Total	2642	165	900	1577	2.245

Explanatory Models: Environmental Impact

Understanding the drivers of spontaneous far-right violence requires that we examine how such incidents differ from planned attacks. Thus, we ran four logistic regression models. The first model included only formal political predictors. These predictors included the percentage representation of the Republican Party in the State Governorship, the State House of Representatives, and the State Senate.[61] Our second model examined variables related to the social and familial environment of the perpetrators, such the cities'/town's/county's demographics, the individual median age, family size, gender, and religious identification. The third model examined economic predictors, including poverty demographics, the unemployment percentage, educational attainment, crime rates, and median individual income. The last model included all the explanatory variables (see Table 4).

The first model indicates that as the percentage of Republican representation in the State House of Representatives increases by one percent, the odds of a far-right incident being spontaneous, as compared to planned, decreases by approximately 2 percent, controlling for all other variables in the model. This may indicate that as the political system seems to be less supportive, and potential costs of violent operations rise, far-right groups are less inclined to engage in violent practices.

Table 4: Logistic Regression Predicting Spontaneity (*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)

Variables	Model 1: Political		Model 2: Social/ Familial		Model 3: Economic		Model 4: Full Model	
	Odds Ratio	Significance	Odds Ratio	Significance	Odds Ratio	Significance	Odds Ratio	Significance
Executive Control	1.173908	0.235					0.9593398	0.872
House Control	0.9741931	0.001**					0.9953422	0.798
Senate Control	0.9980647	0.796					0.9998382	0.992
Population			0.9999999	0.448			0.9999999	0.281
Pct. White			0.9468373	0.000***			0.9545682	0.021*
Pct. Black			0.9452249	0.000***			0.9401732	0.003**
Pct. Hispanic			0.9702784	0.000***			0.9784209	0.106
Median Age			0.9957455	0.801			0.979168	0.618
Average Family Size			0.4860786	0.132			0.1103367	0.089
Pct. Male			0.9793117	0.607			1.080016	0.389
Pct. Catholic			1.009765	0.268			1.00171	0.886
Pct. Protestant			0.99159	0.323			0.9932691	0.533
Pct. Jewish			1.012558	0.505			1.034018	0.251
Pct. Indv. Poverty					1.050161	0.206	1.106073	0.144
Pct. Family Poverty					1.012076	0.786	1.029362	0.716
Unemployment					1.038002	0.349	1.13953	0.06
HS Diploma +					1.01537	0.31	1.031716	0.26
Bachelor's +					1.012366	0.272	0.976078	0.179
Violent Crime Rate					0.9994578	0.036*	0.9994585	0.144
Property Crime Rate					0.9999416	0.268	0.9999568	0.599
Median Income					1.000077	0.000***	1.000141	0.000***
Constant	6.88177	0.000***	10518.81	0.003**	0.0383504	0.017*	0.2383363	0.79
N	1168		891		779		542	
Pseudo-R2	0.0198		0.0628		0.0881		0.1881	

Thus, spontaneous attacks may serve as an alternative for those individuals who are still interested in engaging in violence. The second model examines predictors that relate to the social characteristics of the perpetrators' environment. As can be seen, the only significant explanatory variables are related to the size of minority groups. There is a negative correlation between the size of the White, Hispanic, and African-American population and the odds of the attack being spontaneous. The third model, which focuses on socio-economic explanatory variables indicates a negative correlation between violent crime rate and the odds of a far-right incident being spontaneous. In contrast, we found a positive correlation between the region's median income and the odds of a far-right incident being spontaneous. Lastly, the fourth model which includes all the explanatory variables identified in the three main explanatory factors. As with the case of the second model, here as well there was a negative correlation between the size of the white and African American population and the tendency of attacks to be perpetrated spontaneously. Also, as the median income of individuals in a location increases by one unit, the odds of a far-right motivated incident being spontaneous, as compared to planned, increases by close to one percent.

Explanatory Models: Perpetrators' Characteristics

Perpetrators of planned and spontaneous far-right activities garner minimal media attention. Except for a few notable cases, such as Eric Rudolph and Timothy McVeigh, the media primarily reports on the occurrence of an incident and the dissolution of the criminal case if one exists. As a result, we found our data limited due to a lack of available open sources. To extract some results from the available data, we utilized simpler statistical analyses (i.e., bivariate, and descriptive statistics) to analyze how perpetrator's characteristics correlate with their inclination to engage in spontaneous attacks (vs. pre-planned ones). We split the results into two sections. The first will examine the bivariate association between various perpetrators' demographics and incident type. The second examines the bivariate association between the characteristics of the perpetrator's criminal case and the incident type (see Tables 5 and 6).

Regarding perpetrator demographics, spontaneous actors are statistically significantly younger, less educated, less likely to be married, but more likely to have children than their planning counterparts. More specifically, spontaneous perpetrators were, on average, 24.68-years-old and planning offenders were, on average, 32-years-old, at the time of the incident. Additionally, perpetrators of planned attacks were twice more likely to have achieved a high school diploma or equivalent certification or to be employed (at the time of the incident) in comparison to the perpetrators of spontaneous attacks.

Table 5: T-Test of Perpetrator Characteristics

	Incident Type	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean	T-Value	Significance
Age at Time of Incident	Planned	579	32	14.776	0.614	10.561	0.000
	Spontaneous	929	24.68	9.797	0.321		
Length of Sentence	Planned	306	137.016	186.704	10.6732	6.051	0.000
	Spontaneous	1819	72.242	35.2336	0.8261		

To conclude, spontaneous perpetrators seem to come from a lower socio-economic background as they are usually younger, less educated, and more prone to be unemployed than perpetrators of planned attacks. Also, not surprisingly, spontaneous perpetrators are less likely than planned offenders to be members of extremist or hate groups. Roughly 80 percent of those perpetrators who had planned their violence were members of a hate or extremist group, compared to only 63.7 percent of spontaneous perpetrators.[62] This result is intriguing given the much higher frequency of spontaneous incidents than planned incidents, which could reinforce findings from previous research that identified the majority of hate-motivated offenses as not associated with hate groups.[63]

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests of Perpetrator Characteristics

		Incident Type		
		Planned	Spontaneous	Total
Did the Perpetrator Have Children? (N:118)	No	41.90%	20.00%	37.30%
	Yes	58.10%	80.00%	62.70%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Chi-Square: 4.054	Cramer's V: 0.185		Significance: 0.044	
Perpetrator Marital Status (N: 165)	Single/Divorced/Unmarried	34.50%	19.20%	32.10%
	Partnered	20.10%	42.30%	23.60%
	Married	45.30%	38.50%	44.20%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Chi-Square: 6.382	Cramer's V: 0.197		Significance: 0.041	
Plea Agreement (N:775)	No	41.70%	35.00%	39.10%
	Yes	58.30%	65.00%	60.90%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Chi-Square: 3.535	Cramer's V: 0.068		Significance: 0.060	
Perpetrator Occupation (N:215)	Unemployed	16.70%	3.00%	10.20%
	Student	25.40%	61.40%	42.30%
	Employed	57.90%	35.60%	47.40%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Chi-Square: 31.757	Cramer's V: 0.384		Significance: 0.000	
Prior Correctional Sentences (N:116)	No	29.40%	3.20%	22.40%
	Yes	70.60%	96.80%	77.60%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Chi-Square: 8.957	Cramer's V: 0.278		Significance: 0.003	
Hate Group Membership (N:669)	No	19.40%	36.30%	27.70%
	Yes	80.60%	63.70%	72.30%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Chi-Square: 23.940	Cramer's V: 0.189		Significance: 0.000	
Perpetrator Education	Did not Complete High School	33.70%	63.40%	48.50%
	High School/Equivalent Completion	62.70%	32.90%	47.90%
	Higher Education Degree/Certificate	3.60%	3.70%	3.60%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Chi-Square: 15.106	Cramer's V: 0.303		Significance: 0.001	

Discussion

In this study, we have explored spontaneous terrorist attacks or incidents where the perpetrator engaged in a politically motivated violent event or property offense without the element of premeditation. More specifically, we examined if spontaneous attacks are more likely to occur in a specific socio-political environment or by perpetrators with distinct characteristics. We found that community-level racial characteristics are significantly related to the presence of spontaneous terrorist attacks committed by individuals who are motivated by far-right ideology. The racial and ethnic diversification of a local environment increases the likelihood that far-right motivated individuals will react spontaneously.[64] However, increases in the African American population do not drive spontaneity. This result appears to indicate that while African Americans may be the targets of spontaneous violence and property damage, the Far-Right primarily reacts to the presence of other racial minority groups with an intensification of its violent acts. While most environmental, socio-economic factors showed no significant relationship with spontaneity, we did identify a positive correlation between the median individual income in a location with the odds of a spontaneous attack. Areas with higher median income tend to experience higher levels of spontaneous attacks. This result is counterintuitive because the increasing income in a location should result in declining stress on a local populace. However, examining the background of the individual perpetrators may provide some clarifications.

Spontaneous perpetrators, compared to perpetrators of planned attacks, are not only spontaneous in their terrorist activity, but also in their lives. Spontaneous perpetrators are younger and less educated than planning perpetrators. They are also more likely to have served time in correctional facilities before the incident, even given their youthful age (in comparison to perpetrators of planned attacks). These results indicate that spontaneous perpetrators are more socially and economically marginalized within their communities than perpetrators of planned attacks.

An overall examination of our results uncovers a few important dynamics. Locations undergoing demographic diversification, related to 'other' racial categories, are likely to experience increases in spontaneous far-right violent activity. Changes in racial demographics, linked with increasing median individual income, results in the socially and economically marginalized to feel strain regarding their present socio-economic status. The perpetrators of spontaneous far-right activity who are observing their community changing, leaving them culturally and economically behind, are more inclined to manifest their frustration when they face a social situation that contradicts their underlying political beliefs.

While the characteristics of the perpetrator's criminal case are not directly related to the perpetrator's demographics, the case information indicates how the United States responds to these incidents. Spontaneous perpetrators receive statistically significantly shorter correctional sentences than their counterparts. While spontaneous incidents are usually targeting immigrants and ethnic minorities, law enforcement and the court-system sees the perpetrators as less of a threat than the perpetrators of planned incidents. This is a matter of special concern since law enforcement is unlikely to prevent spontaneous activity, as compared to planned attacks. As a result, these incidents always involve an actual victim, as compared to a 'potential' victim when planned attacks do not materialize.

The results of this study lead to two broad policy findings. The first is the failure to designate spontaneous acts by members of the American Far Right as terrorism. Presently, both the American public and law enforcement do not view these cases as politically-motivated violence, even given their apparent targeting of a particular ethnic demographic and/or specific religious or political groups. When given a designation, law enforcement refers to these incidents as 'hate crimes' rather than terrorism. In the existing hate crimes literature, some scholars refer to spontaneous 'hate crime,' in which a trigger causes the perpetrator to act without prior planning. [65] However, this literature does not address the characteristics of spontaneous hate crime but addresses the criminal implications and legal ramifications of hate crime legislation, with special attention to the rehabilitation of hate crime offenders.[66] We seek to advance this literature by arguing that designating these events as only hate crime leads the American media, law enforcement, and political establishment to blur the political

motivations behind the act since hate crimes are reflecting the domestic politicization of politically motivated crimes. Attacks on a person or property because of the victim's political, social, or religious characterization is a form of political violence, regardless of its premeditation and deliberation. Therefore, the United States ought to adapt to these findings and identify politically motivated criminality regardless of the perpetrator's political, religious, or social motivation as terrorism.

The second finding emerging from our study involves the lack of accessible and available data. While we expected to experience data limitations among unknown perpetrators, we found data limitations across identified perpetrators and even also when seeking to identify spontaneous cases from the larger dataset. The lack of attention that law enforcement, courts, and the American media give to these cases clouds our comprehension of the perpetrators and the incidents. Often, the data we found originated in a small number of local news stories, which discussed the incident and reported about the conclusion of the criminal case. As a result, American society lacks awareness to the proliferation of spontaneous political violence.

Future research should seek to advance our findings in three areas. The first is to expand on the missing data within this work to identify perpetrators, victims, and incident characteristics to provide a more in-depth understanding of the differences between planned and spontaneous terrorist attacks. Similarly, more in-depth case studies of individual incidents may shed additional analytical or theoretical light on the foundation of spontaneity in political violence. Additionally, scholars studying hate crimes should use our results to further their work into spontaneous hate crimes, going beyond just a consideration of the implications of hate crime legislation regarding planned and spontaneous hate crimes. Finally, the exploration and identification of the spontaneity of political violence should not stop with the American Far Right. This phenomenon may yield significant opportunities for analysis of other ideological movements within and outside of the United States.

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- [59] Perliger, Koehler-Derrick, and Pedahzur, "The Gap between Participation and Violence: Why We Need to Disaggregate Terrorist 'Profiles.'"
- [60] The total case number included all incidents where we coded information on the environmental or perpetrator case information. We excluded cases from the offender information when we were unable to identify the number of perpetrators. Additionally, we excluded cases from the environmental data when we were unable to identify the location of the incident through the United States Census Bureau or if the incident occurred prior to the digitization of United States Census Bureau records.
- [61] In the United States, only the State of Nebraska deviates from this structure. They have a unicameral state legislature and a State Governor. In the legislature, there are no party identifiers, thus, the state of Nebraska is missing when we include House Control and Senate Control in the model.
- [62] This result is likely artificially higher due to the source of our data on this variable. Writers are unlikely to highlight the absence of hate group membership. As a result, we coded this variable in the affirmative or negative only when news publications expressly stated the perpetrator's affiliation or lack of an affiliation.
- [63] Gerstenfeld, *Hate Crimes: Causes, Controls, and Controversies*; McDevitt, Levin, and Bennett, "Hate Crime Offenders: An Expanded Typology."
- [64] In our analysis, our racial demographics included White, African American, and Other. The logistic regression excluded "other" due to issues of multicollinearity. Therefore, our racial analysis is the measured groups in comparison to the "other" category. Therefore, as the population of White persons increases, the likelihood of spontaneity decreases, which implies that as the "other" category increases, the likelihood of spontaneity increases.
- [65] Iganski, "Criminal Law and the Routine Activity of 'Hate Crime.'"; McGhee, "The Challenge of Working with Racially Motivated Offenders: An Exercise in Ambivalence?"
- [66] Chakraborti, "Re-Thinking Hate Crime: Fresh Challenges for Policy and Practice."; Chakraborti and Garland, "Reconceptualizing Hate Crime Victimization through the Lens of Vulnerability and 'Difference'"; Green, McFalls, and Smith, "Hate Crime: An Emergent Research Agenda."; Iganski, "Criminal Law and the Routine Activity of 'Hate Crime.'"; McGhee, "The Challenge of Working with Racially Motivated Offenders: An Exercise in Ambivalence?"

Recent Trends in German Right-Wing Violence and Terrorism: What are the Contextual Factors behind 'Hive Terrorism'?

by Daniel Koehler

Abstract

Germany experienced in recent years a resurgence of several forms of organized and unorganized extreme right-wing violence, including lone-actor attacks, pogrom-like mass violence or clandestine cells plotting and executing attacks. A new and puzzling development, according to the German authorities, is the increasing involvement of individuals with no previous ties to the extreme right-wing environment, i.e. 'ordinary citizens', in terror plots or severe acts of violence (e.g. arson and explosive attacks). To address this puzzle, this article follows the development of extreme right-wing violence and terrorism in Germany between the detection of the 'National Socialist Underground' (NSU) terrorist cell in 2011 via the so-called 'refugee crisis' of 2015 and 2016 to the data currently available in 2018. The goal is not to explore causal pathways to right-wing violence in Germany but to explain the nature of the phenomenon, using the most recent theoretical literature. It is argued that a combination of significant refugee influx, the struggle of the legal system to label severe acts of extreme right-wing violence clearly as terrorism and a subcultural change (i.e. the decreased importance of extreme right-wing political parties in favour of subcultural forms of mobilization) might in theory have resulted in lowering the threshold for contact between 'ordinary' citizens and highly radicalized extremists. In addition, this combination of factors might also have encouraged 'ordinary' citizens to engage in severe acts of extreme right-wing-motivated violence by facilitating the transmission of grievances, opportunities, and polarization.

Keywords: Germany; extreme right-wing terrorism; violence; hive terrorism

Introduction

Between 2015 and 2016, more than one million refugees came to Germany, making it the height of what was called the 'refugee crisis' by the German and European press. At the same time, acts of terrorism and violence motivated by extreme right-wing ideologies surged in Germany. By 2018, numerous trials had resulted in dozens of individuals charged and convicted for crimes motivated by extreme right-wing ideologies, such as attempted murder, explosive attacks, arson or forming criminal and terrorist organizations. This development became visible four years after the detection of the 'National Socialist Underground' (NSU) cell, which was uncovered in 2011 after having engaged for more than a decade in clandestine assassinations and bombings, resulting in one of the longest court trials in German post-Second World War history (from 6 May 2013 to 11 July 2018). In itself, this is nothing new, given the long history in Germany of extreme right-wing violence and terrorism.[1] However, this increase in several forms of right-wing political violence, ranging from lone-actor attacks, through clandestine cells of long-term neo-Nazis plotting explosive attacks and assassinations, to spontaneous attacks arising from anti-immigration grass-roots and street-based mass movements, involved not only individuals who had been long-term members of the extreme right-wing milieu, but also persons with no previous background in extreme right-wing activism.

Recently, the German authorities have started to observe what they found to be a new development within extreme right-wing terrorism. As a result of an intelligence analysis on the biographical backgrounds of 77 individuals, both from 16 groups and including lone actors, involved in the most recent cases of extreme right-wing terrorism or severe violent acts (e.g. arson, attempted and completed homicides, explosives and firearms attacks), the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz - BfV) found that the perpetrators were mostly male (92 percent) and between 30 and 35 years of age, which was not unexpected. However, the sample displayed an unusual mix of long-term and highly radicalized extreme right-wing activists on the one hand, and individuals with no previous ties to the organized extreme right-wing

movement on the other.[2] In fact, the majority of the perpetrators belonged to the second group and were completely unknown to the security agencies before the attacks or their involvement in plots. These attacks were also mostly carried out impulsively, with a distinct lack of preparation and sophistication, leading to tactical errors. The analysis also found an unspecified notion of 'resistance' to be among the main ideological driving factors, and that those persons with a long-term involvement in the extreme right took on leading positions in the plots and attacks.[3]

It therefore appears that, for some reason, more or less ordinary persons without previous ties to extremist groups and movements got caught up in severe, but more or less spontaneous, plots or acts of violence in such a short period that the authorities did not appear to pick up signals that put them up as at high risk of violent radicalization. This development (i.e. the involvement of individuals with no previous ties to extremist groups and networks in severe acts of violence and terrorism) has previously been described as 'hive terrorism'[4] but there has not been an in-depth case study exploring the various potential factors influencing the individuals' involvement. This article therefore closes a theoretical gap by applying the 'hive terrorism' concept to the development of right-wing violence and terrorism in present-day Germany.

A number of violent incidents with an extreme right-wing motive in Germany, involving persons without a known connection to the extreme-right environment, have received wide public attention in recent years. For example, a 48-year-old music teacher committed eight arson attacks against government buildings in Berlin in 2015 before being apprehended. He had left letters claiming responsibility and using the name of a 'German Resistance Movement' (Deutsche Widerstandsbewegung) and blamed pro-immigration politics for the attacks.[5] In February 2015, a government tax employee in Hamburg conducted an arson attack against a refugee home and was convicted; his motive was identified as xenophobia.[6] Another example happened in November 2017, when an unemployed painter attempted to stab to death a pro-immigration mayor, who survived the knife attack.[7] Finally, in March 2018, a 71-year-old woman was sentenced to nine years in prison for two arson attacks in October 2016 and March 2017, one of which caused a fatality. The court determined that her goal was to stage a false flag attack so that an Iranian refugee would be blamed for the fires; the motive was again xenophobia.[8] None of the perpetrators of these incidents had any known contact with established extremist groups or networks. In addition, the German intelligence report cited above (see endnote 2) indicates that the number of mixed groups (those that include both known right-wing extremists and outsiders) plotting and executing acts of terrorism also seems to have been increasing.

This article aims to explore the most recent cases of extreme right-wing violence and terrorism in Germany (post-NSU detection 2012–2018), using the theoretical concept of 'hive terrorism', as well as contextual developments in Germany. This is done to answer the main question of this article: How can the development by which 'ordinary' citizens come to be involved in severe forms of extreme right-wing violence without previous connections to extremist milieus and groups, i.e. 'hive terrorism', be explained theoretically?

Regarding the main research question, it is argued that a combination of the influx of refugees, the struggle of the legal system to identify and label severe acts of extreme right-wing violence clearly as terrorism and a sub-cultural change (i.e. the decreased importance of extreme right-wing political parties in favour of subcultural forms of mobilization) has resulted in a significant lowering of the threshold for contact between 'ordinary' citizens and highly radicalized extremists. In addition, this development might have encouraged 'ordinary' citizens to engage in severe acts of extreme right-wing motivated violence by facilitating the transmission of grievances, opportunities, and polarization. These factors have been found crucial for increased levels of extreme right-wing violence and terrorism by Ravndal (see endnote 13). This facilitation was in turn made possible through a critical mix of individuals willing to deploy and accustomed to deploying violence for political aims (i.e. highly radicalized long-term members of the extreme right-wing milieu) with a larger pool of new potential followers who were not at risk of being on the radar of the security agencies.

Methodology, Sources and Definitions

The following analysis is a theoretical reflection about the potential factors involved in the involvement of individuals with no previous ties to the extreme right-wing environment in extreme right-wing terrorism and violence. As a base for this reflection, this article uses case studies of the most recent (2012–2018) entries in the ‘Database on Terrorism in Germany (DTG)’ by the German Institute on Radicalization and De-Radicalization Studies (GIRDS).[9] As the most recent entries are naturally the ones where there is the least extensive information available, the case studies are mainly based on press reports. Government documents, such as for example annual intelligence reports or parliamentary inquiries, were used to complement the existing information. Court documents (i.e. verdicts) were used whenever available to complement the sample. However, as trials focusing on severe crimes (e.g. forming a terrorist or criminal organization) typically take years to be completed and the verdicts are usually appealed, so that there can be more years before the original verdict finally enters into force, or the case has to be tried again, very few verdicts were available for the years since 2012.

This article uses various contested terms, most importantly ‘right-wing extremism’ and ‘terrorism’. As it is not the goal here to discuss the nature and definitions of these terms in detail, the following reflection is based on the Academic Consensus Definition of terrorism by Alex Schmid, which understands terrorism as a:

doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties.[10]

Based on the definition of Heitmeyer[11], ‘right-wing extremism’ is understood as a combination of ideologies involving acceptance of inequality, on the one hand, and acceptance of violence on the other.

Together, ‘extreme right-wing terrorism’ as a concept has also been debated, especially in relation to other approaches to understanding the phenomenon, such as (for example) ‘hate crimes’. Further, extreme right-wing violent acts can be a tactic of terrorism, but also of non-terrorist political crimes or even be committed by right-wing extremists without a political motive. Hence, the role of violence for right-wing extremists is fluid. [12] As a consequence, the following reflection uses the term ‘extreme right-wing terrorism and violence’ in accordance with Ravndal[13] to include those acts, although they have not been identified as ‘terrorist’ by law enforcement or courts in Germany. As will be shown below, relying on the legal classification only would be problematic, and this classification procedure is in itself an aspect of the theoretical explanation for ‘hive terrorism’ proposed in this study.

Literature Review and the Concept of ‘Hive Terrorism’

‘Hive terrorism’ as a theoretical concept was defined by Koehler[14] as fluid networks centred around shared opposition to democratic government and immigration and mobilizing activists from mainstream society more or less spontaneously for terrorist and other violent acts. The term “hive” points to the continuously changing nature of the group involved, with dynamic and constantly shifting compositions. Thus, the lack of strategic long-term planning or organizational embeddedness of (the majority of) perpetrators is an essential part of ‘hive terrorism’. The phenomenon can have two different manifestations: a) ‘ordinary’ individuals with no ties to extremist groups or persons deciding seemingly spontaneously to use severe forms of violence (e.g. arson, explosives, knife attacks) to fight what they might perceive as an existential threat posed by refugees, minorities, or politicians who are seen as responsible for the threat (usually with a left-wing and pro-immigration agenda); or b) the involvement of ‘ordinary’ individuals without previous ties to extremist groups or persons in terrorist plots, together with long-term members of the extremist environment. While the first form of hive terrorism is spontaneous and guided by emotions such as fear and panic, the second manifestation might be a conscious and deliberate recruitment and mobilization strategy on the part of extremist groups to involve persons in violent plots and actions who are not at high risk of being known to the authorities. For both manifesta-

tions, an opportunity to interact, either with the physical side of extremist networks (e.g. long-term members, literature, appearances at concerts or demonstrations), or with the psychological aspects of it (e.g. its ideology defining the threat, the enemy, and the proposed violent solutions) seems theoretically to be a necessary condition. This interaction occurs within what was called “radical contrast society” by Koehler[15], defined as “the mechanisms involved within the social system (including infrastructure and ideology) of interaction between Radical Social Movements and their surrounding societies.”[16] This theory posits that extremist groups which belong to radical social movements have two social targets: a positive one, which they aim to win over and control, and a negative one, which they aim to destroy. The theory of radical contrast societies is based on various entry and exit points into the radical social movement, where the radical or extremist group interacts with, or ‘touches’, its positive and negative target societies. These entry points could be, for example, extremist rallies, concerts, literature, or personal interaction with violent extremists. The more fluid and open this sphere of interaction is, the more likely it will be that persons without previous contact with the extremist milieu will end up internalizing its ideology or participating in its activities, without necessarily becoming committed insiders.

There are essentially two ways to approach the search for relevant literature on the phenomenon of ‘hive terrorism’: first, one could look at literature on individual radicalization processes, to shed light on questions regarding which individuals without ties to extremist milieus become involved in certain acts of ideologically driven violence, or participate in terrorist plots, together with hardened extremists, and why they do so. However, this would require extensive and detailed knowledge about the life history and decision-making processes of the perpetrators in question, which is naturally rarely available since they have not been involved in extremist milieus prior to the incidents. In addition, the scientific basis for risk factors associated with involvement in terrorism is contested, and some authors do not find that there are any significant factors.[17] Second, it would be possible to approach the ‘hive terrorism’ phenomenon through existing knowledge about the operational and structural characteristics of extreme right-wing terrorist groups and tactics of violence, although this literature is scarce when compared with that on other forms of political violence, especially jihadist violence.

Recently, new efforts by some scholars in Europe and the United States have led to some significant advances in the field.[18] According to Ravndal’s seminal study[19], two different factor combinations – of a) high immigration, low electoral support for anti-immigration (radical right) parties, and extensive public repression of radical-right actors and opinions, and of b) socioeconomic hardship, authoritarian legacies, and extensive left-wing terrorism and militancy – facilitate right-wing terrorism and violence. Both combinations contain three main elements: grievances, opportunities, and polarization. As will be shown in the course of this analysis, these three factors can be found in German cases as well and are useful to apply to the ‘hive terrorism’ concept.

Furthermore, Simi, Windisch and Karyn[20] pointed out the importance of extreme right-wing subcultural scenes for the recruitment and indoctrination of right-wing terrorists, in addition to other factors such as exposure to racist beliefs in the person’s upbringing. The role of subculture in extreme right-wing terrorism has also been highlighted in other detailed studies.[21]

At the operational level, several scholars found a strong preference for lone-actor or small-cell tactics by right-wing extremist terrorists. Perliger’s[22] dataset, for example, shows that 54 percent of all 4,420 extreme right-wing violent incidents between 1990 and 2012 in the United States of America were committed by single perpetrators, and 20 percent by groups consisting of only two-persons. The Southern Poverty Law Center looked at 63 incidents in the United States between April 2009 and February 2015 and found that 74 percent of the attacks were carried out by lone actors.[23] Additional international studies seem to support that notion. Analyzing 198 lone-actor attacks, Spaaij[24] found that right-wing actors constituted the second largest category (17 percent), next to attacks in which the perpetrator’s ideological conviction remains unknown. A similar study of 119 lone actors found that 34 percent had an extreme right-wing background.[25] A subsequent, more detailed, analysis by Gill[26] of 111 European and American lone-actor terrorists showed that right-wing attackers constituted the largest group (39 percent), ahead of al-Qaeda-inspired attackers (34 percent). This holds true in other country-specific studies, for example in Germany, where Koehler[27] showed that lone-actor and small-cell tactics are by far the most widespread organizational form of right-wing terrorism. Hence, it appears that – albeit far from exclusively right-wing – lone-actor and small-cell terrorism are the main modes

of operation for right-wing terrorists. Lone actors and small-cell members, however, usually had at least some previous connection to extreme right-wing groups and were found to have been ideologically or behaviourally influenced by them.[28] Paul Gill, for example, found, that 51.2 percent of his sample of extreme right-wing lone-actor terrorists had face-to-face interactions with members of a wider extreme right-wing network before the attack.[29] This points to the importance of even short-term contact with extremist movement insiders to incite or mobilize outsiders to severe acts of violence.

Manifestations of ‘Hive Terrorism’

After the country’s reunification, between 1991 and 1994, the involvement of individuals without ties to extremist milieus in what were nevertheless severe acts of extreme right-wing-motivated violence was for the first time observed on a significant scale in Germany. At this time, the fall of the Iron Curtain and civil wars in Yugoslavia and other former Soviet-ruled countries resulted in record numbers of refugees coming to Germany.[30] During that period, 1,499 extreme right-wing-motivated arson attacks were counted by the German authorities over two years. In 60 percent of the cases, the authorities started official investigations, leading to verdicts against 295 individuals between 1990 and 1995.[31] A total of 63.3 percent of the perpetrators had not been previously convicted of any crime, and only 21 percent were known to be active in a right-wing party or skinhead group. In 30.9 percent of the cases, the attack was directly carried out by two persons, in 41.2 percent by three to five persons, and in 15.4 percent by more than 10 persons. A total of 68.5 percent of the perpetrators were intoxicated (mostly with alcohol) during the attack and, in 60 percent of the cases documented by courts, there was almost no time invested in planning or preparing the attack.[32]

The available data on the perpetrators’ intent, even given that the attacks were spontaneous and the perpetrators intoxicated, gives a strong indication about the nature of ‘hive terrorism’: in the majority of cases, the relationship between victim and perpetrator was non-existent or irrelevant, while the main motive was to achieve a high media impact to send a signal to the government and to the hated target group of immigrants. [33] Although the quality of the political message and signal was not sophisticated or embedded in a long-term group-based strategy, the combination of (violent) protest against immigration and an attempt to force refugees to leave the country through fear combines the archetypical elements of the “Academic Consensus Definition of Terrorism”. [34]

During the second wave of extreme right-wing crimes against refugees between 2015 and 2016 (see Figure 1 in the following section), this pattern changed somewhat. First, tactics diversified and included attacks against politicians, violent clashes with the police protecting refugee shelters, car bombs, explosions and others. Nevertheless, the twofold aim of the attacks stayed the same – to protest against the immigration policies of the government and to force refugees out of the location or threaten other refugees not to come to Germany. Second, although scientific studies about this wave of large-scale extreme right-wing violence do not exist yet, the initial data suggests at least some similarities with the wave of violence in the early 1990s. For example, out of 148 perpetrators identified by the authorities in one preliminary analysis, only 41 (27.7 percent) had been convicted of previous crimes while the majority were not active in any organized right-wing group.[35] The role of intoxication, however, seems to be different. Only 32 perpetrators (21.6 percent) were intoxicated during the attacks.[36] This picture was supported by a subsequent police analysis looking at 228 perpetrators.[37] Only 14 persons had committed two or more of these attacks, 167 lived in close proximity to the attack sites, the average age was between 20 and 25 and alcohol was very rarely involved. Although about 50 percent of the perpetrators were known to the police from previous crimes, only 33 percent had committed right-wing crimes of any sort before attacking a refugee’s home. Although the majority of perpetrators did not participate actively in right-wing extremist organizations before their attacks, most of them did nevertheless display clear right-wing extremist ideologies on social media or otherwise,[38] showing that the ideological motivations behind the attacks might indeed have overlapped with organized extreme right-wing groups and are more serious than, for example, acts of vandalism caused by group pressure or situational dynamics.

These numbers relate to the first aspect of ‘hive terrorism’, namely acts of extreme right-wing-motivated vio-

lence or terrorism, with no connection to the established extreme-right-wing environment perpetrated by a mob, small groups, or lone actors. The second aspect, involvement of milieu outsiders in terror plots together with milieu insiders, might be a new development of right-wing terrorism in Germany, as pointed out by the previously cited German intelligence analysis from the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV).[39]

As this BfV study is classified and not available to the public beyond some limited press reports about its content, a smaller duplication study was done for this article, using the biographical information of right-wing terrorist actors in the DTG database. All post-2012 entries (after the discovery of the NSU) that either involved an actual act of violence being committed or individuals being charged by the authorities (e.g. with attempted murder, forming a criminal or terrorist organization, crimes involving explosives, or arson) were included. Individuals not yet charged but under investigation, or merely suspected of having plotted an attack, were excluded from the analysis. In total, data on the biographical backgrounds of 55 individuals in 14 DTG entries were assessed, focusing on any known ties to the extreme right-wing milieu before the violent incident or arrest and charges. The sample consisted of seven lone-actor attacks or plots, one group of two, one group of three, two groups of four, one of six, two of eight, and one of thirteen members. Acts of violence committed by these actors include a total of two knife attacks, 10 arson attacks, and eight explosive attacks, mostly against refugees, pro-immigration politicians, and left-wing activists. Of these 55 individuals, 17 (30.9 percent) had no previously known ties to the extreme right-wing milieu. For 13 individuals (23.6 percent), not enough information was available to determine that factor, even though it is likely that a known extreme-right-wing background would have been reported in the press. It is significant that, of the lone-actor attacks, only two individuals had known ties to extreme-right-wing milieus in their pasts, meaning that five (71.4 percent) had no such background. Of the group-based sample entries, one was completely composed of individuals with no known ties to the extremist milieu (a group of three). The sample also included two groups that were charged and convicted of forming a terrorist organization (the so called 'Old School Society' - OSS) with six persons charged and/or convicted, and the 'Freital' group with eight members charged and convicted). While the OSS consisted mainly of long-term right-wing extremists (a female member was the girlfriend of one of them but had no record of previous involvement in the milieu herself), the Freital group's leader was the only one with known previous ties to the organized extreme right.

Of those 17 individuals without ties to extremist milieus, at least nine (52.9 percent) consumed extreme right-wing subcultural products like music and literature and voiced xenophobic or racist views, for example on social media or by taking part in anti-immigration rallies (e.g. PEGIDA - Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident), before the incident or arrest and charges. These anti-immigration rallies seem to be a particularly important space for establishing contacts between individuals with and without ties to the organized extreme-right-wing movement, or served as an effective facilitator of grievances, polarization, and opportunities. In the autumn of 2016, for example, a regular PEGIDA participant without ties to the extreme right-wing milieu was arrested for conducting two bomb attacks against a mosque and conference centre in Dresden and was charged with attempted murder and severe cases of arson.[40] Other cases from the DTG database show the significance of attending PEGIDA rallies and connecting to long-term extremists as well. Of the Freital terrorist organization, at least three of the eight members got in touch with each other and the group's leader via PEGIDA rallies.[41] Another group currently on trial for forming a criminal organization and executing multiple assaults on refugees as well as an explosive attack (the Freie Kameradschaft Dresden) developed in 2015 out of bar meetings between neo-Nazis and PEGIDA participants right after attending in demonstrations.[42]

So far, this article has looked at the individual-level manifestations of 'hive terrorism', namely what is known about the biographies of perpetrators and plotters of extreme right-wing violence during the latest wave of attacks, in comparison to the situation in the early 1990s. Based on this part of the analysis, the potential importance of subcultural products and anti-immigration rallies as a space in which to make contact with more extremist activists was noted. The following section will widen the scope and look at the broader contextual factors.

Contextual Factors and Development of German Right-Wing Violence and Terrorism between 2012 and 2017

'Hive terrorism' theory posits that 'ordinary' individuals with no previous ties to extremist groups and networks either come to participate in terrorist plots together with long-term movement members or decide to use serious forms of violence (e.g. arson, explosives, or knife attacks) on their own. This logically requires a low threshold for contact with long-term extremists and their groups, on the one hand, and/or a lack of deterrence, combined with existential threat perception, on the other. In essence, the factors found by Ravndal[43], namely grievances, opportunity, and polarization, are key to understand the dynamics of 'hive terrorism'. This article argues that the influx of refugees, the struggle of the legal system to label severe acts of extreme right-wing violence clearly as terrorism, and a subcultural change (i.e. the decreased importance of extreme-right-wing political parties in favour of subcultural forms of mobilization) result in these two outcomes (i.e. a low threshold for contact and a lack of deterrence), essentially enabling 'hive terrorism'. This, in turn, directly facilitates grievances, opportunities, and polarization. The following section will identify contextual developments in Germany, partially using proxy indicators, which support these theoretical enablers.

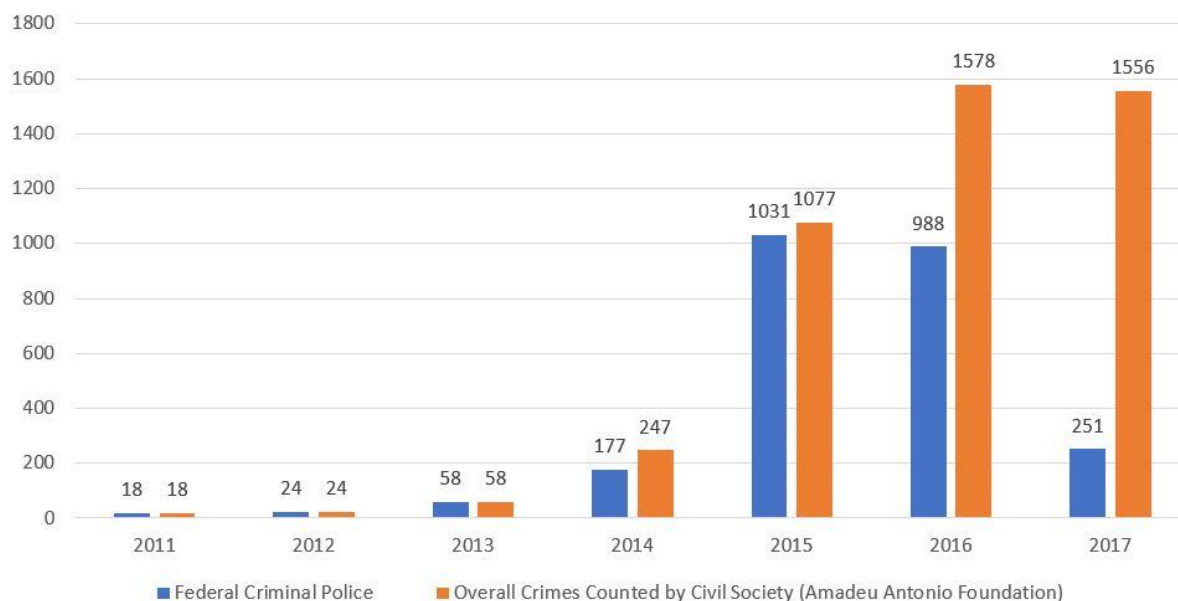
Referring to Ravndal's analysis,[44] Germany seems to belong to the first factor combination: high immigration, low electoral support for anti-immigration (radical right) parties, and extensive public repression of radical right actors and opinions. With the exception of some local state parliament entities for the extreme right-wing NPD party, Germany has a strong tradition of not voting for the extreme right. Right-wing populist and anti-immigration parties, such as the Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland AfD) party, which entered the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) in 2017, might, however, have an impact here. In addition, extreme right-wing forms of expression are criminalized to an unusual degree for a Western democracy. This includes the public display of the swastika or other Nazi symbols. Extreme right-wing associations can be (and are) quickly banned as anti-constitutional in many cases. As will be seen below, the number of refugees coming to Germany also significantly increased in 2015 and 2016, a period dubbed the 'refugee crisis' by the German press.

As the most important data source for this analysis, the German authorities (police and intelligence services) publish annual numbers within its 'politically motivated crimes' framework. Even though these numbers are also contested (mostly by civil society watchdogs regularly criticizing underreported crime levels), they provide a comparatively detailed reference point, based on a coherent definitional system. As Figure 1 shows, the influx of refugees to Germany coincided with a significant increase in anti-refugee housing attacks with an extreme right-wing motive. An overview of the refugee influx to Germany as seen through the annual numbers of asylum applications is provided below (Figure 2). The comparative number of attacks against refugee homes by civil society watchdog organizations includes all recorded crimes, regardless of the perpetrator's motive. These attacks include acts of violence (e.g. arson, use of explosives, stone throwing) as well as extreme right-wing vandalism and propaganda (e.g. swastika graffiti).

This significant increase in refugees coming to Germany in 2015 and 2016 was a highly polarizing event for the German population, as indicated by the widely used term 'refugee crisis'. Right-wing populist parties and grassroots movements capitalized on this polarization. In parts of Germany (e.g. Heidenau, Freital), pogrom-like anti-immigration riots that lasted several days showed the intensity of this polarization. Furthermore, the increased presence of refugees, often placed in specially designated refugee centres, provided the extreme right and anti-immigration movements with an ideal opportunity, i.e. a target, to mobilize against. Grievances based on propaganda portraying refugees as security, economic, or even health threats (e.g. the widely used 'rapefugee' slur) became an essential element of anti-immigration rallies and extreme right-wing mobilization. In addition, the significant gap between overall crimes against refugee homes recorded by civil society organizations in 2017 and extreme-right-wing motivated crimes listed by the police could potentially signal a highly unusual normalization of crimes against refugee homes, if this gap is not the result of different definitions, unidentified perpetrators, or other distorting effects.

Figure 1

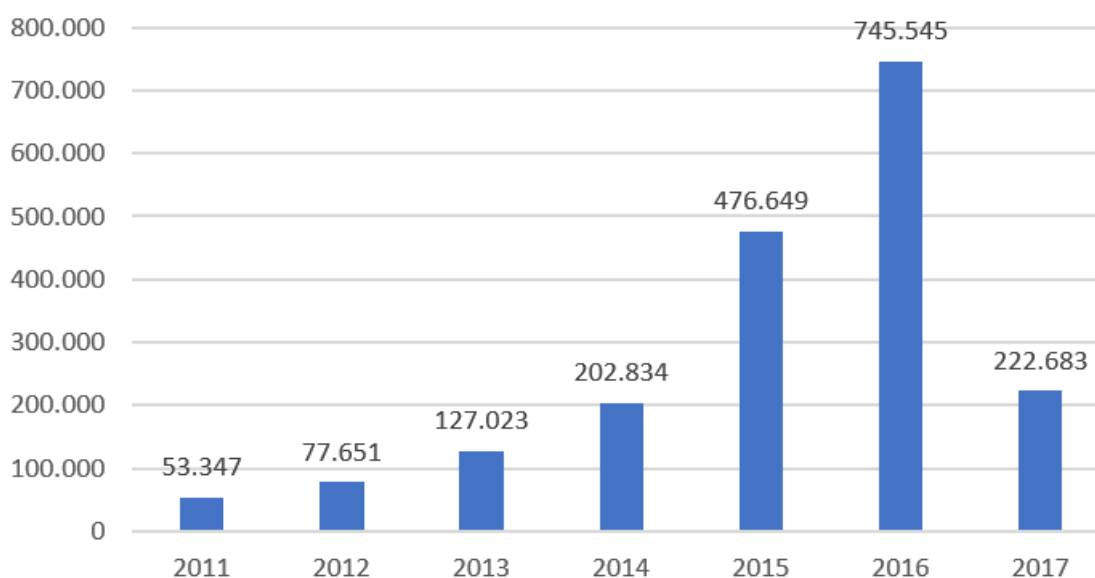
Extreme Right-Wing Motivated Crimes Against Refugee Homes and Centers in Germany



Source: Annual Crime Statistics (Kriminalstatistik) and Amadeu Antonio Foundation

Figure 2

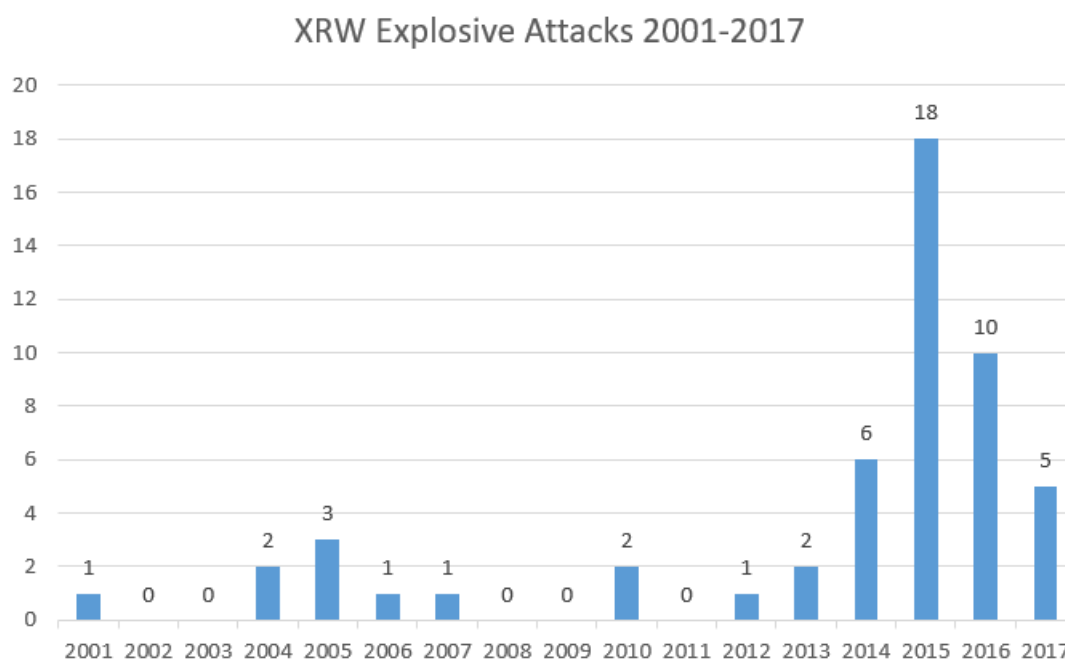
Annual Applications for Asylum in Germany



Source: German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

Germany experienced increases in all types of extreme right-wing violent crimes beyond attacks on refugee centres, during the same time period (2015 and 2016). Attacks using explosives, for example, tripled between 2014 and 2015 (Figure 3). Although extreme right-wing bomb attacks decreased again, the level is still significantly higher than in any year prior to 2015.

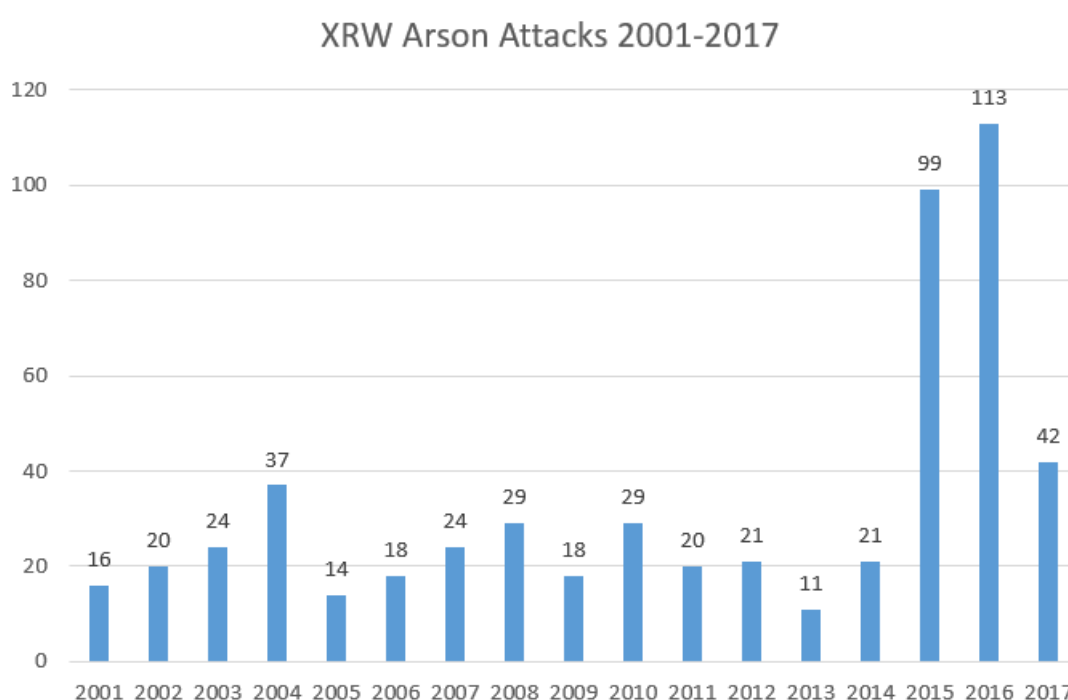
Figure 3



Source: Annual Intelligence Reports

Arson attacks, another form of severe violence with specific terroristic psychological effects, also increased significantly in 2015 and 2016 by about 540 percent compared to 2014. In contrast to explosive attacks, arson did not decrease in 2016 but only in 2017.

Figure 4



Source: Annual Intelligence Reports

Table 1: Distribution of Extreme Right-Wing Arson and Explosive Attacks by Targets.

	Arson Attacks			Explosive Attacks		
	Overall	Against Refugee Homes	Percent of Overall	Overall	Against Refugee Homes	Percentage of Overall
2015	99	94	94.9%	18	8	44,4%
2016	113	66	58.4%	10	4	40%
2017	42	17	40.48%	5	2	40%

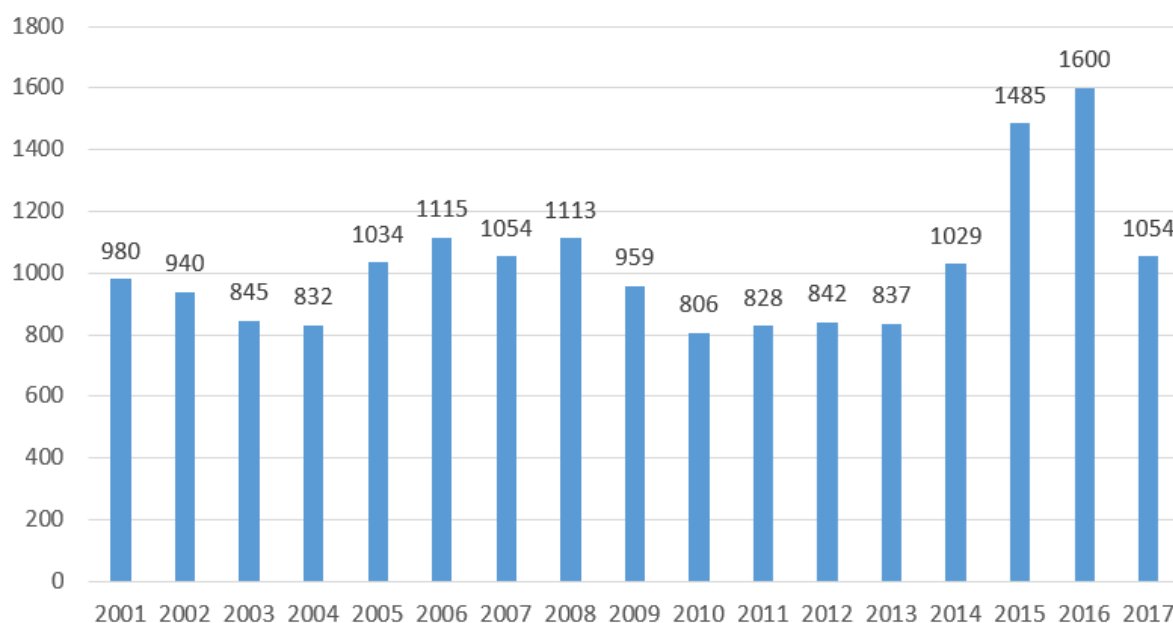
Source: Annual Crime Statistics (Kriminalstatistik) and Annual Intelligence Reports

Breaking down extreme right-wing arson and explosive attacks between 2015 and 2017 into attacks directed against refugee centres and other targets, it becomes clear that arson in particular was used to attack buildings designated as future refugee centres or inhabited by refugees, while explosive attacks were used against more a variety of targets (Table 1). Arson attacks, however, did diversify from 2016 onwards as well.

Finally, extreme-right-wing motivated violent crimes (against all targets) in Germany in recent years display a much stronger variance, and also increased significantly to a 16-year overall record high in 2016, compared with 2001, when the current definition system for the crime statistics was introduced (Figure 5).

Figure 5

XRW Violent Crimes 2001-2017



Source: Annual Intelligence Reports

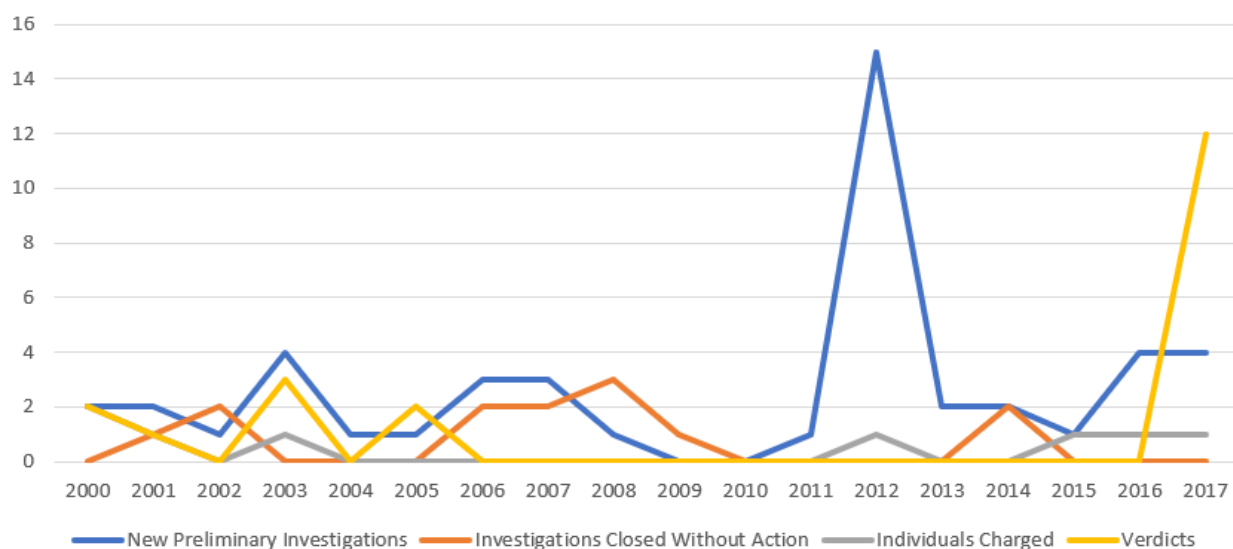
In sum, it is fair to say that a significant increase in refugees coming to Germany between 2014 and 2016 coincided with an equally significant rise in extreme-right-wing violence and, using attacks involving arson and explosives as proxy indicators, in terrorism. Even though refugee housing accounts for a large share (between 40 and 94 percent) of the targets for these acts of severe violence (i.e. by arson or explosives), one can assume that the refugee influx might have unleashed more potential for violence against many different targets. It may have acted as a catalyst, by providing an ideal mobilization opportunity for extreme right-wing and anti-immigration groups, as well as have intensified perceived grievances among those critical of immigration in what became a highly polarized population. To explore further the proportion of targets of extreme right-wing

violence that have a connection to the so-called refugee crisis beyond attacks against refugee homes (i.e. volunteers, pro-refugee politicians, civil society organizations working with refugees) more data need to be collected.

Numbers of acts of violence motivated by an extremist ideology need to be compared with numbers of judicial proceedings against individuals for extreme right-wing terrorism by the German Federal Prosecutor General (Generalbundesanwalt GBA). These numbers can be used as another proxy indicator to see whether (severe) extreme-right-wing-motivated violence has been perceived as terrorism in the legal system in Germany and labelled as such. Investigations by the GBA, the highest German prosecution office, carry a strong public and political weight, as well as typically receiving substantial press coverage. Being investigated and charged by the GBA in Germany automatically carries the effect of being associated with the most serious forms of crime (e.g. international and domestic terrorism). If they lead to convictions, GBA charges have a high chance of resulting in long-term prison sentences and significant social stigmatization (e.g. of being a 'convicted terrorist'). Especially for individuals without previous criminal records with the authorities or without previous contacts with extremist environments (i.e. 'ordinary citizens'), the effect of GBA investigations and charges could theoretically mean increased consequences following a crime, as well as serve as a significant, morally normative, marker against such actions. However, the real effects of anti-terrorist legislations and any deterrence is disputed. The numbers of initial investigations (Ermittlungsverfahren), charges, verdicts, and closings of proceedings without legal action arising from paragraphs 129, 129a and 129b of the German criminal code (i.e. forming of, or membership in, a criminal or terrorist organization within or outside Germany) have been regularly reported by the German government in parliament, responding to opposition party information requests. Figure 6 shows the numbers for each factor (which does not equal the number of suspects, since each investigation, verdict etc. can encompass multiple persons) over the last 16 years. It is clear that there has been an increase in terrorism investigations and verdicts in parallel to the recent spike in serious extreme-right-wing violence. However, even if keeping in mind that one group could have been responsible for more than one arson or explosive attack, the number of new investigations (four in 2016 and six in 2017) still falls short of the overall level of serious violence. It is also striking that the unusual spike in new investigations in 2012 (15) clearly happened before the so-called refugee crisis began and during a phase of comparatively little violent activity by the extreme right. This number was most likely a reaction to the discovery of the NSU cell in 2011, triggered by political and popular pressure. This is also supported by the fact that almost all of the investigations starting in 2012 have been closed without any further action such as terrorism charges being taken.[45]

Figure 6

Judicial Proceedings on §129, 129a, 129b Criminal Code by Federal Prosecutor General Against Right-Wing Extremists in Germany



Source: Parliamentary Inquiries and Governmental Replies

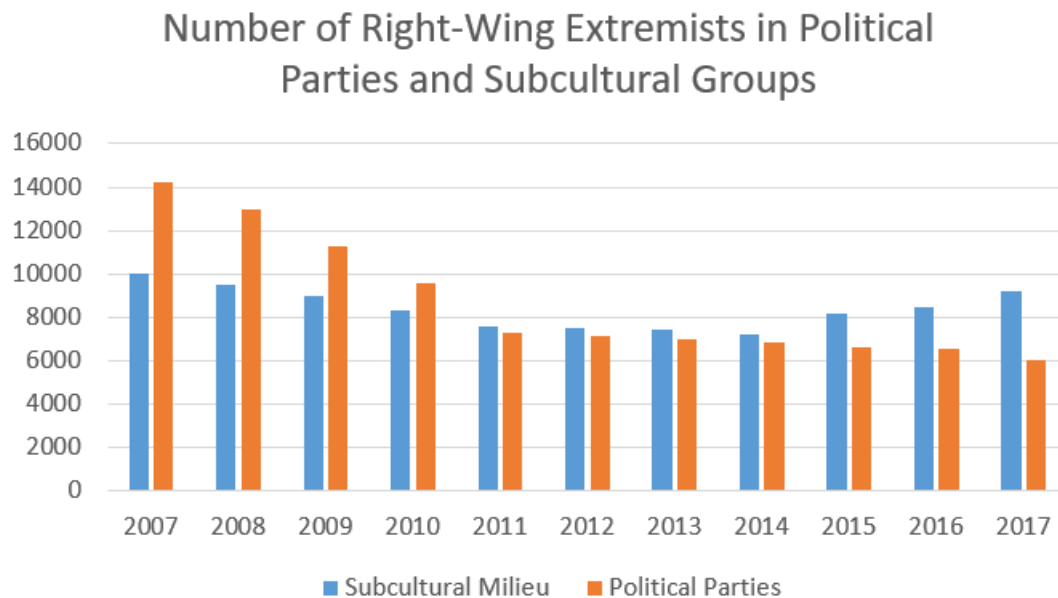
The legal definition of what constitutes a criminal or terrorist organization in Germany under paragraph 129 section 2 of the penal code is a “long-term, organised association of more than two persons, independent of the definition of roles of members, the continuity of membership and the development of the structure, for the purpose of pursuing an overriding common interest”. This definition was introduced at the end of 2016, as a reaction to a European Union framework decision regarding the legal definitions of criminal and terrorist organizations. The difference regarding the previous German legal understanding of such an organization was the minimum number of persons involved (three) and the focus on the coherence of the structure, as well as subordination of the members’ will to the group.[46] Notwithstanding the facts that these crimes are prosecuted under various different criminal statutes and that perpetrators, if identified, are charged and convicted accordingly, the legal label of ‘terrorism’ seems rarely to be applied to extreme right-wing violence. There could be two main reasons for this: a) the majority of the acts may have been perpetrated by fewer than two or three individuals (old German vs. new EU-based definition), i.e. by lone actors (for which there is a specific statutory provision, §89a, which is associated with exceptionally high evidence thresholds in court[47]); or b) group-based serious acts of violence did not fit the legal understanding of being connected to an ‘organization’ (e.g. with long-term strategy and organizational hierarchy). Referring back to the discussion on defining terrorism above, research has shown that the legal definition is too narrow to cover the diversity of terrorist actors, and especially fails to cover the fluid and loose nature of some of the network or organizational types used by terrorists.

In addition, the numbers presented above indicate that the legal definition, at least at the start of investigations, is applied inconsistently and in a way that does not reflect the actual level of violence. This leads to the first contextual factor that is possibly contributing to ‘hive terrorism’: a weak and inconsistent application of anti-terrorism criminal law, based on legal definitions that do not properly reflect the diversity of terrorist organizations. In essence, this might lead to a lack of legal (and thereby psychological) deterrence against extreme-right-wing terrorism through a perceived difference in costs and morally normative stigmatization between extreme-right-wing and other forms of violence and terrorism.

Furthermore, as was shown, for example, by the work of Simi et al.[48] regarding the importance of subculture in recruiting and radicalizing extreme-right-wing terrorists, ‘hive terrorism’ requires low thresholds for outsiders not in contact with extremist milieus to become involved in violent acts or terrorist plots. In other words, it must be relatively easy to make contact with extremists to become involved in such acts. Barriers to contact could, for example, be simply the lack of opportunity to get in touch with hardened and charismatic extremists or the perception that involvement might mean having to join highly stigmatized organizations that could jeopardize an individual’s economic and social standing (e.g. joining an extreme-right-wing party). Proxy indicators for low thresholds for contact between extremist milieu members and outsiders and increased interaction between the two were membership numbers, extreme-right-wing concerts and music events, and rallies and demonstrations. A word of caution, however, must be applied to using concerts and demonstrations as proxy indicators for a low threshold for contact. It is possible that these events, especially extreme-right-wing music concerts, mainly target movement insiders and that, due to the significant stigma events such as extreme-right-wing skinhead concerts carry, they might constitute a deterrent to outsiders interacting with insiders, rather than an opportunity. Rallies and demonstrations might have been organized by, or linked to, official extreme-right-wing parties and, even though by their very nature they have high public visibility, they could also be seen as stigmatizing. Nevertheless, both concerts and demonstrations are undoubtedly among the most important recruitment and political advertisement tools for the extreme right. An increase in the use of these tools might therefore signify a stronger attempt to mobilize and recruit movement outsiders, as well as a potentially higher chance of interaction with sympathizers and would-be followers. The main components of this interaction, according to the ‘radical contrast society’ theory, are the conveying of key ideological elements and increased motivation to participate in physical activities (e.g. rallies, concerts). Especially at the time of the so-called refugee crisis, extremist groups were very likely to focus on an increase in grievances (e.g. anger against pro-immigration politics, fear of, and hatred against, refugees, the perception of relative deprivation), further polarization (e.g. of those against politicians and activists and those in favour of immigration and supporting refugees) and the provision of opportunities to voice and show dissent (e.g. rallies, acts of violence).

First, the membership ratio between subcultural groups and official parties in the extreme-right-wing milieu clearly indicates a subcultural change in recent years (Figure 7). A continued decrease in membership of traditional extreme-right political parties coincided with a moderate, but steady, increase in membership of subcultural groups. At a minimum, the subcultural milieu was not influenced by the diminishing of political party membership.

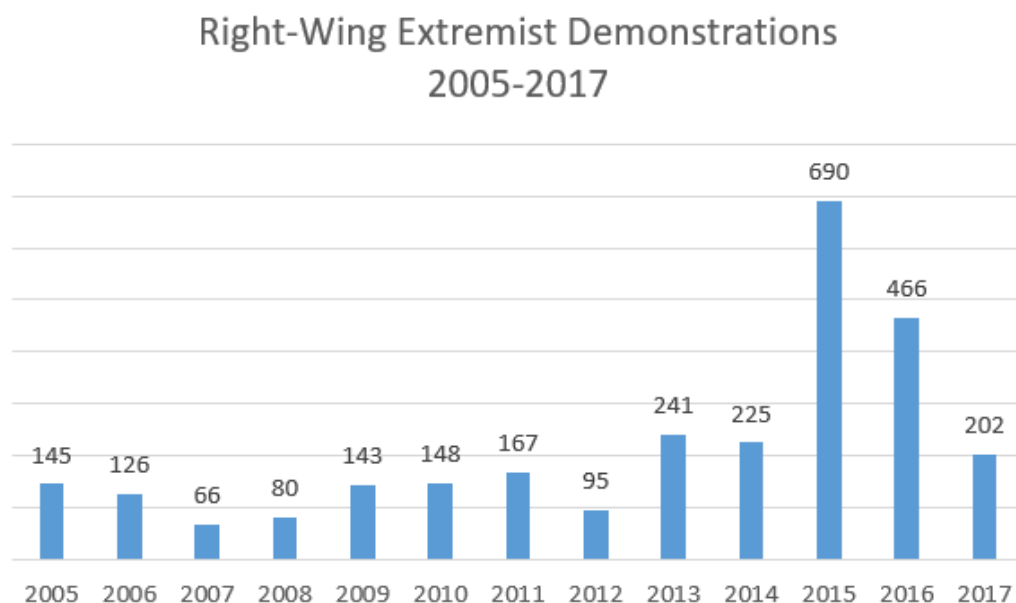
Figure 7



Source: Annual Intelligence Reports

Second, mobilization activities on the extreme-right-wing also surged during the so-called refugee crisis. As Figure 8 shows, extreme-right-wing rallies and demonstrations significantly increased in 2015 and, although they decreased in 2016, they were still more than twice the number in 2014. It can be suspected that many of these rallies and demonstrations evolved around the 'refugee' theme, and might have been more open and accessible than rallies with a clearer extreme-right-wing motive.

Figure 8

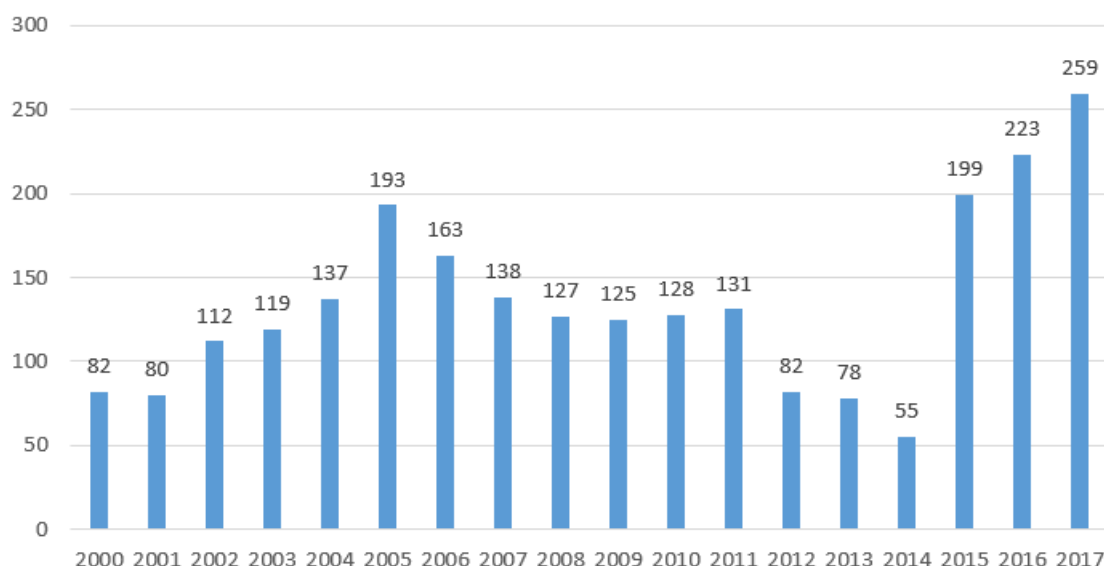


Source: Annual Intelligence Reports

Another key opportunity to interact with outsiders and potentially recruit new members were extreme-right-wing concerts and music events, which also significantly increased between 2015 and 2017 (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Extreme Right-Wing Concerts and Music Events in Germany



Source: Annual Intelligence Reports

Conclusion

Germany has experienced a surge in extreme-right-wing-motivated violence and terrorism in recent years, coinciding with a record number of refugees arriving in the country applying for asylum. This surge in political violence not only brought back traditional right-wing tactics (e.g. long-term members of extremist groups going underground and plotting attacks) but also appears to have led to the phenomenon of individuals without ties to extremist groups either directly committing serious violent acts (e.g. arson, attacks involving explosives) or joining hardened violent extremists in terrorist plots. While the first aspect of this phenomenon, called 'hive terrorism', already occurred to some degree in the Germany of the early 1990s, the second (i.e. mixed groups of plotters with or without ties to extremist networks) is new and makes law enforcement and violence prevention much more difficult.

It has been argued in this article that a combination of significant refugee influx, the struggle of the legal system to label serious acts of extreme right-wing violence clearly as terrorism and a subcultural change (i.e. the decreased importance of extreme-right-wing political parties in favour of subcultural forms of mobilization) has resulted in a significant lowering of the threshold for contacts between 'ordinary' citizens and highly radicalized extremists. In addition, this development has encouraged 'ordinary' citizens to engage in serious acts of extreme-right-wing-motivated violence, namely by facilitating the transmission of grievances, opportunities, and polarization. These three factors were found crucial for increased levels of extreme-right-wing violence and terrorism by Ravndal[49] and also contribute to 'hive terrorism'. However, the explanation presented here is theoretical in nature and aims to explore a new and under-studied topic by applying existing research and theories, as well as to suggest directions for further study. A solid statistical analysis, in combination with more qualitative evidence, is warranted. Although some empirical indications were presented here (e.g. the background of outsiders to extremist movements and some of their pathways into plots, taken from the DTG dataset), more analysis, both on the quantitative and the qualitative level, is necessary. More data will become available in the near future, for example when the court verdicts referred to above, which will include detailed information on the trajectories by which the plotters became radicalized, become accessible to researchers.

Another factor not taken into account here is the influence of right-wing populist parties or rhetoric on 'hive terrorism'. Deliberately using anti-establishment campaigning paired with inflammatory or derogatory rhetoric directed at immigrants, for example, can theoretically facilitate the lowering of thresholds for contact with the extreme right and also lower psychological barriers against using serious forms of violence. Hence, the relationship between right-wing populism and 'hive terrorism' ought to be closely examined in future research.

Furthermore, since this case study looked only at Germany, a closer investigation of the applicability of 'hive terrorism' in other countries and the potentially connected contextual factors discussed here would be an important next step.

Finally, the phenomenon of 'hive terrorism' in Germany points to the potential threat posed by the inflammatory combination of inadequate legal deterrents against extreme-right-wing terrorism (or the insufficient application of existing deterrents), a perceived existential threat, and increased extreme-right-wing subcultural forms of mobilization. This directly supports the notion that countering violent extremism and terrorism is indeed a 'whole of society' endeavour. Law enforcement, the judiciary, civil society, and the political realm must act together to prevent and counter a lowering of the barriers protecting societies from violent extremism. The 'hive terrorism' theory clearly shows, that using law enforcement and intelligence as the main strategy is bound to fail. Especially, when suspects involved in terrorist plots have no previous background in violent extremism, the authorities are very unlikely to detect them in time. In order to reduce the effect of lower contact thresholds between extremist networks and other parts of the society, both a widespread public awareness and a positive democratic culture are necessary.

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Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Putin's Russia

by Johannes Due Enstad

Abstract

This article introduces the case of right-wing terrorism and violence in Putin's Russia into the purview of terrorism studies. It explores the modus operandi of Russian right-wing militants by analyzing a new dataset, RTV-RUSSIA, which includes nearly 500 violent events covering the period 2000-2017. Compared to their Western European counterparts, Russian right-wing militants have operated more violently (with attacks being more frequent) as well as more purposefully (with a larger share of premeditated attacks). The article offers a historical and a comparative explanation. The first answers the question of why a wave of right-wing violence occurred in the 2000s, stressing the socio-economic turbulence of the 1990s, increasing immigration, ideological radicalization amid restrictive political opportunities and a permissive discursive environment, and the rise of the internet as an arena for spreading violent propaganda. The comparative explanation tackles the question of why Russia has seen so much more right-wing violence than Western countries, highlighting the combination of anocratic regime type, high violence levels, high immigration, and low social stigmatization of extreme-right views.

Keywords: Terrorism; violence; right-wing; Russia; modus operandi; dataset

Introduction

It is about time to introduce the case of right-wing militancy in post-Soviet Russia into the field of terrorism and political violence studies. To the limited extent that terrorism scholars have studied the extreme right, the Russian case has so far remained beyond the radar.[1] As this article will show, Putin's Russia has seen much more right-wing violence than any other comparable country in the past 25 years. There can be little doubt as to the importance of this particular case as a piece in the larger puzzle of how and why right-wing violence and terrorism occurs.

This article also contributes to the literature on the extreme right in post-Soviet Russia. Scholars of nationalism and the far right in Russia have primarily dealt with issues concerning identity, discourse, ideology, and politics; few have ventured to study the sharp end of this phenomenon—violent activism. There are some notable exceptions. Scholars such as Mihai Varga and Richard Arnold have explored various aspects of right-wing violence in post-Soviet Russia, producing insights into some of the social and political dynamics involved (e.g., the role of government-created opportunities, nationalist public opinion, and the strategic choices of militant leaders in facilitating violence).[2] Moreover, the numerous analytical reports by Nataliia Iudina and others at the SOVA Center provide year-by-year snapshots of the developing situation on the Russian extreme-right, making for a valuable source of information.[3] What has been lacking, however, and what this article seeks to provide, is an empirically thorough overview of right-wing militancy in Putin's Russia, including the landscape of militant actors and their modus operandi.

In what follows, a new event dataset, Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Russia (RTV-RUSSIA), compiled by the author and including 495 incidents of right-wing violence occurring in the period 2000-2017, will be presented and analyzed in order to explore how Russian right-wing militants organize, how they go about when carrying out attacks, and whom they target. Next, the article moves on to look at how the modus operandi developed over time in the period 2000-2017. Finally, two explanations are offered: the first is a historical explanation to account for the observed wave of violence in the 2000s: Why did it occur at this particular point in time? The second is a comparative explanation to account for the high level of right-wing violence in Russia relative to Western Europe.

Event Data

The RTV-RUSSIA dataset currently consists of 495 events, including 406 deadly events causing 459 deaths over a period of eighteen years (2000-2017). RTV-RUSSIA has been patterned on the RTV dataset (Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe) compiled by Jacob Ravndal,[4] and features the same set of variables (date, location, event type, perpetrator type, perpetrator's organizational affiliation, victim, weapon(s) used, number of casualties, as well as a description of the event).

RTV-RUSSIA is built largely by relying on sources compiled by the SOVA Center, a Moscow-based NGO that has been monitoring right-wing violence systematically since 2004.[5] For preceding years, events have been registered using information gathered from secondary literature and news reports. Sifting through SOVA's online event database, the author studied each entry carefully, read the attached sources (predominantly Russian-language media reports), and decided whether or not to include the event. In the process, about 200 deadly events registered in the SOVA database were left out, as a right-wing motivation could not be established. In the typical event left out, a person belonging to one of the victim groups was found stabbed or beaten to death, but no perpetrator or witness could be found. While SOVA researchers have included many such events, typically based on observations of the victim's ethnicity and the fact of multiple stab wounds (a typical feature of racist attacks), in RTV-RUSSIA, most of them have been left out because of a lack of information.

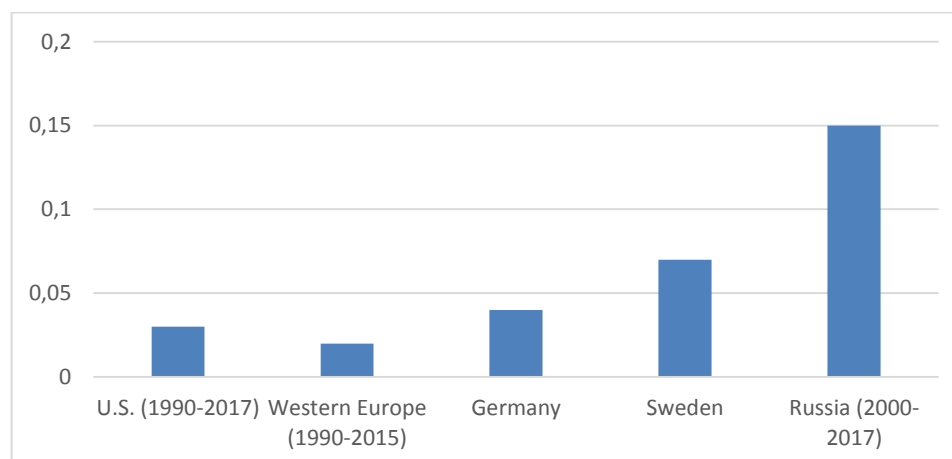
Although an offspring of the RTV dataset, RTV-RUSSIA in its current state differs somewhat from its parent with regard to inclusion criteria. RTV-RUSSIA includes the following types of violent event: (1) attacks with a fatal outcome; (2) attacks and known plots involving explosive devices; and (3) pogroms, defined as onslaughts involving large groups of attackers (dozens or more), typically targeting marketplaces or migrants' dormitories. While RTV also includes non-fatal attacks involving the use of deadly weapons such as knives, RTV-RUSSIA currently does not include this category.

Why not register non-lethal beatings and stabbings? While such events are certainly serious enough, leaving victims hospitalized, traumatized, and terrorized, they are also more likely to go unreported. Many of the victims are illegal labor migrants who will not report to the police or talk to journalists. The registered number of non-lethal stabbings and beatings, then, is likely to be substantially lower than the real number of such occurrences. When someone is killed, a bomb explodes, or a large-scale pogrom occurs, the event is more likely to be reported in the media and thus make its way into the SOVA Center's database. By registering these categories, we probably capture something close to the universe of such events.

Organization, Weapons, Targeting

Let us break down the RTV-RUSSIA dataset in order to inspect more closely the phenomenon of Russian right-wing militancy. How do activists organize, what weapons do they use, and whom do they target? When defining this particular beast, we have the good fortune, thanks to the RTV dataset published in 2016, of being able to compare its features with those of its Western European relative.

The single most striking feature on the Russian side is the amount of violence, measured by the number of attacks with a lethal outcome. In Western Europe, with eighteen countries inhabited by 401.7 million people (2005 UN estimate), right-wing militants have carried out 190 lethal attacks killing 303 persons over a period of twenty-six years (1990-2015). (Note that 25% of these victims died in one single event, the 2011 Norway attacks.) Russia, according to RTV-RUSSIA, has witnessed 406 deadly right-wing attacks with 458 people killed over a period of eighteen years (2000-2017). Taking into account differences in population size and the number of years for which we have data, Figure 1 shows how Russia has seen five times more violence than the U.S.,[6] 750% more than Western Europe as a whole,[7] nearly four times more than Germany, and twice as much as Sweden (Sweden and Germany have the highest counts in Western Europe).

Figure 1: Deadly Events per Million Inhabitants per Year

What kinds of perpetrators are behind the violence in Russia?[8] As indicated in Table 1 below, gangs and unorganized groups have carried out most of the attacks (135 and 91 events, respectively), being jointly responsible for 62% of events with a known perpetrator type. They are followed by organized groups (54 events/15%) and autonomous cells (41 events/11%). The share of events with an unknown perpetrator type is quite high (26%). While the type of perpetrator could not be established in these cases, the known circumstances surrounding the events nevertheless left little reasonable doubt as to the attackers' right-wing motivation.

Table 1. All Events, by Perpetrator Type and Violence Type

Perpetrator type	Type of Violence					Sum
	Premeditated attacks	Spontaneous attacks	Plots	Preparation for armed struggle	Unknown	
Organized groups	48	3	2	-	1	54
Affiliated members	10	1	2	-	1	14
Autonomous cells	34	-	7	-	-	41
Gangs	121	12	-	-	2	135
Unorganized	74	15	1	-	1	91
Lone actors	16	8	2	1	1	28
Shadow groups	-	-	-	-	1	1
Unknown	104	7	2	1	16	130
Total	408	46	16	2	23	495

How do the organizational features of Russian right-wing violence measure up to what we see in Western Europe? Given the partly differing inclusion criteria in RTV-RUSSIA and RTV, we need to isolate events with a lethal outcome in order to make a valid comparison. Table 2 shows that while the predominance of gangs and unorganized groups (jointly responsible for 71% of all deadly attacks with a known perpetrator type) is similar

to what we see in Western Europe (62%), a striking difference appears when looking at lone actors. While Western European solo terrorists have carried out 22% of the lethal attacks causing 44% of all fatal victims (25% if we exclude the 2011 Norway attacks), in Russia lone actors account for just 7% of such events and 6% of all fatal victims. Another marked difference is found in the ratio of premeditated to spontaneous attacks, which amounts to 1.2:1 in Western Europe and 7.5:1 in Russia. Russia's low share of lone actors and high share of premeditated attacks suggests a higher level of organized militancy and a stronger ideological commitment among activists.

Table 2. Deadly Events by Perpetrator Type and Violence Type, Russia and Western Europe.
(Bracketed Figures refer to Norway's 2011 Breivik Attacks).

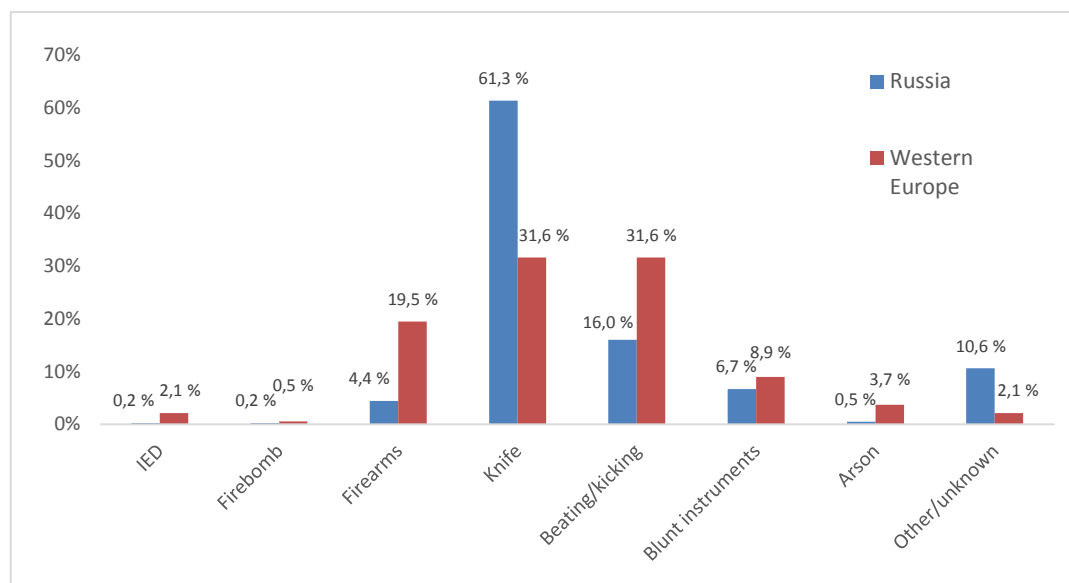
Perpetrator type	Type of Violence				
	Premeditated attacks, RUS/WE	Spontaneous attacks, RUS/WE	Unknown/ other, RUS/WE	Sum (killed), Russia	Sum (killed), Western Europe
Organized groups	34/1	3/1	1/1	38 (56)	3 (5)
Affiliated members	8/7	1/3	1/0	10 (12)	10 (10)
Autonomous cells	15/13	0/1	0/0	15 (17)	14 (18)
Gangs	103/36	11/36	2/0	116 (127)	72 (76)
Unorganized	73/20	15/24	1/0	89 (93)	41 (55)
Lone actors	12/21	8/20	1/0	21 (26)	41 (56 [+77])
Shadow groups	0/2	0/0	1/0	1 (1)	2 (2)
Unknown	93/4	7/0	16/0	116 (127)	4 (4)
Total	338/104	45/85	23/1	406 (459)	190 (226 [303])

Moving on to look at the scale of events with a lethal outcome, the vast majority of such attacks, as shown in Table 3, whether carried out by groups or individuals, has led to the death of a single person (92%). In fact, in the midst of all the killing, there is only one event that comes close to a mass-casualty attack—the bombing of the Cherkizovo marketplace in Moscow in August 2006, in which 14 people died. In Western Europe, too, just one large-scale attack has occurred, while no more than a handful of attacks have resulted in more than one or two deaths. Right-wing violence and terrorism in Russia has been a low-scale phenomenon like in Western Europe, but with a substantially higher frequency. (Bracketed Figures refer to Norway's 2011 Breivik Attacks).

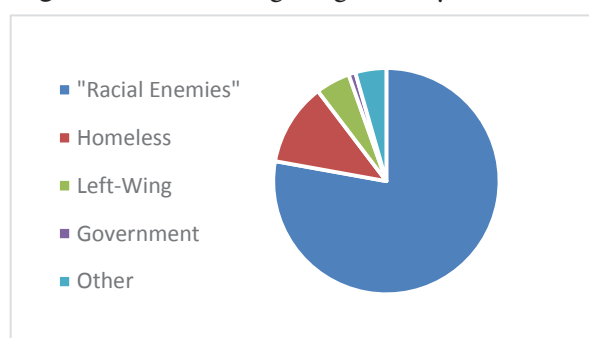
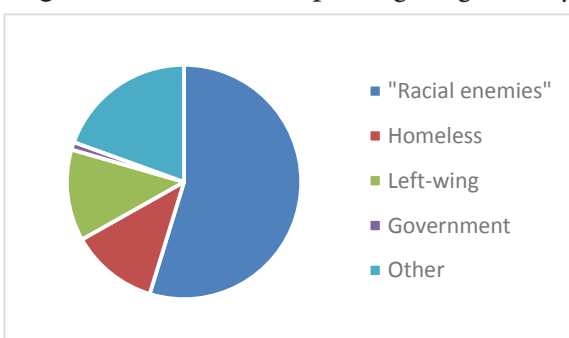
Next, we consider the weapons preference of right-wing militants in Russia as compared to Western Europe. Looking at events with a lethal outcome, we see that while activists in both settings have mostly preferred primitive weapons or unarmed attacks (Russians displaying a particular affinity for the knife), the share of attacks involving firearms, IEDs, and arson is substantially greater in Western Europe (25%) than in Russia (5%).

Table 3. Deadly Events by Perpetrator Type and Number of Fatal Victims

Perpetrator type	Scale of Attacks					Total
	1 victim	2 victims	3 victims	4 victims	14 victims	
Organized groups	33	3	1		1	38
Affiliated members	8	2				10
Autonomous cells	14		1			15
Gangs	108	6	1	1		116
Unorganized	86	2	1			89
Lone actors	16	5				21
Shadow groups	1					1
Unknown	108	5	3			116
Total	374	23	7	1	1	406

Figure 2. Weapons Use (Deadly Events)

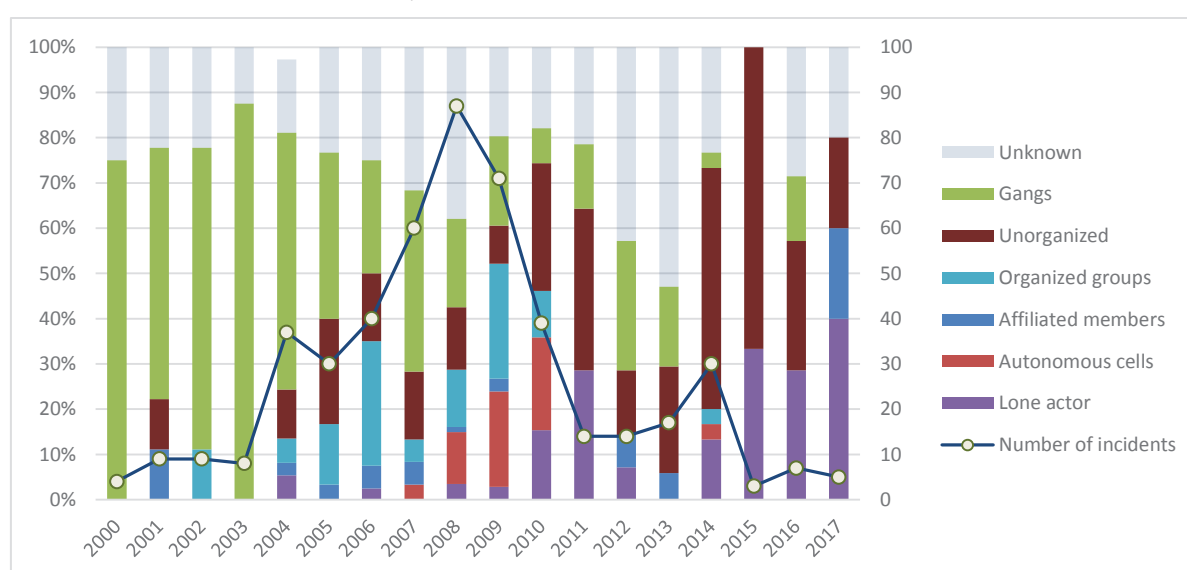
Predictably, right-wing militants mainly target persons they consider racial/ethnic enemies, first and foremost non-white immigrants. Yet there is substantial variation from east to west. As Figures 3 and 4 show, Russian militants have targeted “racial enemies”[9] more often than their Western European counterparts (78% versus 55% of all events with a lethal outcome). Western militants’ targeting has been more evenly spread out across the spectrum of enemies. The left is targeted more often in Western Europe, probably reflecting the presence of a larger, more entrenched left-wing movement that engages more intensively (and perhaps more violently) with the extreme right. The category of “Other” is about five times larger in Western Europe, and includes a variety of target groups, the most frequent being LGBT persons (ten events) and Muslims (four events). In Russia, no deadly attack has explicitly targeted Muslims. It is worth noting that Jews, commonly assumed to be a main target of right-wing extremists, have been at the receiving end of just two deadly events in Russia and two in Western Europe.[10]

Figure 3. Russia: targeting (deadly events)**Figure 4.** Western Europe: targeting (deadly events)

Patterns of Change and Continuity, 2000-2017

So far, the features of right-wing terrorism and violence in Russia have been surveyed from different angles, using 18 years of data and comparisons with Western Europe to form an overview of the overall phenomenon. In order better to understand what has been going on, however, we need to study change and stability over time. How have organizational features and attack patterns developed in the past two decades?

In Figure 5, the columns indicate the share of various perpetrator types for all events, while the line shows the total number of events, year by year. The clearest pattern emerging here is the gradual decline of gangs. By the time the wave of violence peaked in 2008-09, gangs were no longer the predominant type of perpetrator. While gangs accounted for 51% of all attacks with a known perpetrator type in the period 2000-2008, their share dropped to 19% for the period 2009 to 2017. As gangs receded, organized groups and autonomous cells began to appear more frequently in the landscape of violent activism, jointly accounting for 33% of attacks with a known perpetrator type in the years 2004-2010, after which they all but disappeared from the scene. Also notable, the share of lone actor attacks has increased more than six-fold, from 3% of all events with a known perpetrator type in the period 2000-2009 to 19% in the period 2010-2017. In this respect, Russia seems to follow in the West's footsteps—in both the U.S. and Western Europe, scholars have reported an increase in lone-actor terrorism in recent decades.[11]

Figure 5. Perpetrator Type (%) and Number of Events, 2000-2017 (all Events)

Moving on to focus on weapon use over time (Figure 6), it is clear that while knife attacks and beatings dominate in most years, the period 2006-2011 witnessed a rise in the use of IEDs. The same period also saw an increase in the number of known failed plots (from zero in the period 2000-2005, to fifteen in the period 2006-2011),

several of which could have caused massive damage had they been carried out. In one case, an 8-kg explosive device was to be detonated in a crowded public place; another event involved a 2.5-kg ammonium nitrate-based device packed with ceramic and glass shrapnel that was intended to explode in a McDonald's restaurant in Moscow. Another powerful device was to go off inside a club during an anti-fascist conference, potentially killing "a great number of people", according to police sources.[12] The failure of these and several other plots resulted from a combination of sheer luck, vigilant police work, and incompetence on the part of the would-be bombers.

Figure 6. Weapon Use (%) and Number of Events, 2000-2017 (all Events)

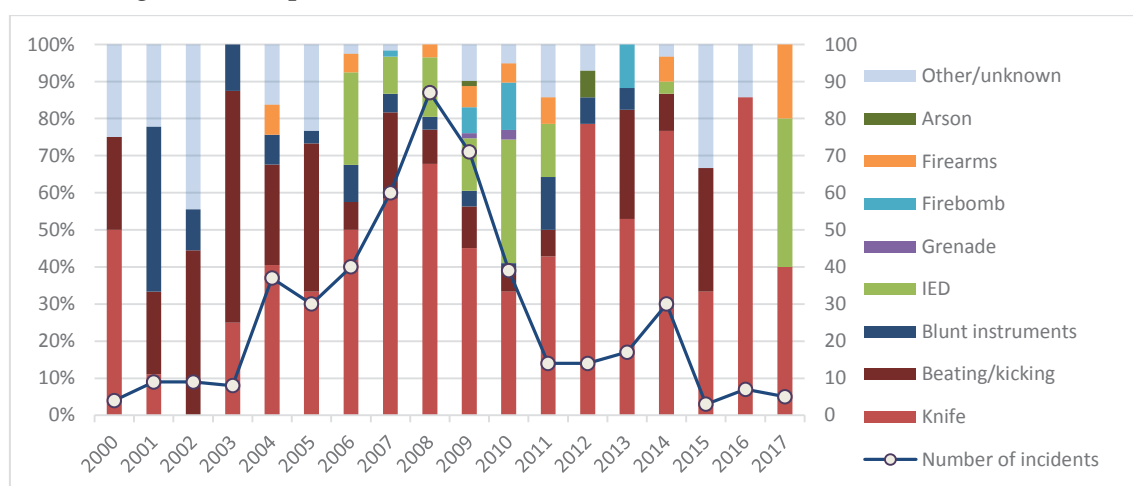
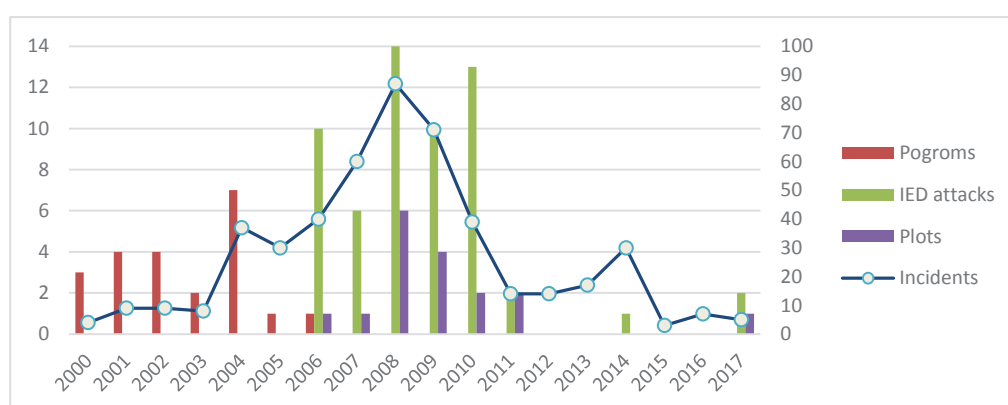
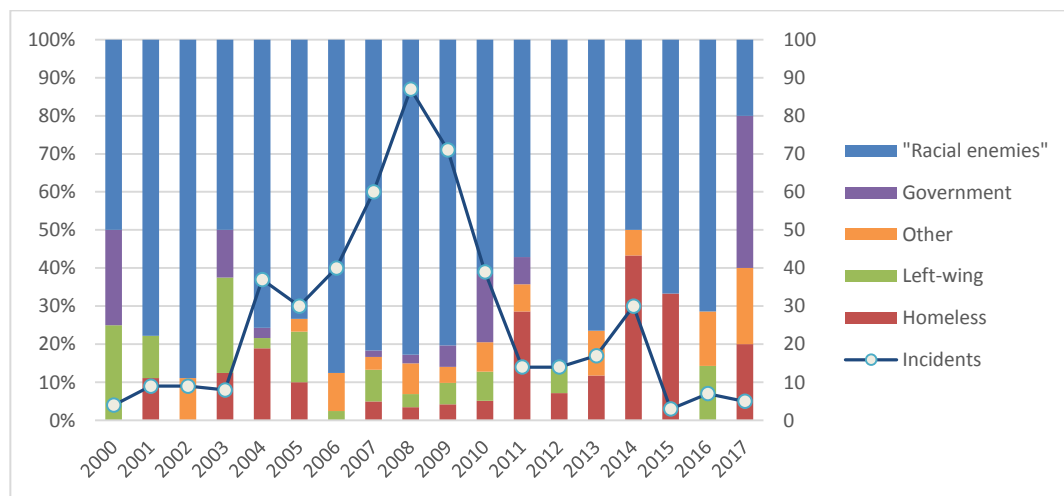


Figure 7 shows the number of pogroms (large-scale attacks involving dozens of activists, typically targeting marketplaces operated by immigrants, concerts attended by left-wingers, or dormitories inhabited by labor migrants), IED attacks, and plots, together with the overall number of events. Pogroms were a main feature of skinhead violence in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but then ceased to occur after 2006, whereupon we see a six-year wave of IED attacks and plots, rising and falling with the overall tide of violence.

Figure 7. Pogroms, IED Attacks, Plots, and Number of Events, 2000-2017 (all Events)



As for targeting dynamics (Figure 8), "racial enemies" have remained the dominant category throughout the entire period. Moreover, the share of attacks targeting homeless persons appears to have increased somewhat in the years after 2010. Looking at government targets, most of these attacks (15 of 20) occurred in the period 2006-2011.

Figure 8. Targeting, 2000-2017 (all Events)

Development over Time: A Historian's Explanation

Looking at the data presented above, a historian's natural question would be: Why did this major wave of violence occur when it did? The following section tries to answer that question by presenting a three-phase periodization of the period 2000-2018, taking into account causal factors along the way that help explain the rise and fall of violence. For the uptick in violence, those factors include: the birth and growth of a Russian right-wing skinhead subculture in the 1990s; ideological radicalization fueled by immigration-related grievances and the closing of political opportunities; and the deliberate exploitation of new technology (the internet and mobile recording devices). As for the subsequent fall in the level of violence, key factors include increased attention by law enforcement agencies and internal division in the nationalist movement.

Trouble Brewing: The Chaotic 1990s

The 1990s was a turbulent decade for the Russians, with economic crisis, rampant crime, and separatist tendencies tearing at the country's seams. Moreover, the Soviet Union had perished along with a whole system of officially sanctioned norms and values, leaving an identity vacuum. Struggling to maintain order, the new political authorities lacked popular trust. This kind of situation, as political psychologist Karen Stenner has demonstrated, amounts to a normative threat that inevitably activates intolerant attitudes in a large part of any population.[13] And indeed: Ethnic nationalism now emerged as a potent force to fill the void left by the Soviet system's implosion. In the words of one expert on Russian nationalism, the post-Soviet years witnessed "Russia's ethnic renaissance", and the new infatuation with ethnicity carried undertones of racism, with talk of the Russian nation's "biological victimization".[14] At the same time, labor migrants (legal and illegal ones) from Central Asian countries and the Caucasus were becoming increasingly visible in Russian cities, adding to the sense of normative threat.[15]

Under such circumstances, it is not hard to understand why many young people were drawn to gangs for protection, status, and a sense of belonging. The right-wing skinhead subculture, which made its first inroads among Russian youth in the early 1990s, offered a story about national identity as well: We are Russians, we are Slavs, we are Whites, and this is our country; we must come together to fight the enemies that threaten to replace, dilute, and destroy us. As one influential ideological manifesto, published in 2000, put it: "Skinheads are white warriors, soldiers of their race and nation. They stand on the frontlines of the racial battle, fighting every day for the future of the white race and the happiness of their people." [16] By the end of the 1990s, the right-wing skinhead subculture and its associated forms of style and behavior had become an entrenched social phenomenon in Russian society. Its adherents were committing an increasing number of violent attacks.

Phase One (2000-2004): Skinhead Onslaught

The situation at the turn of the millennium, then, was one of escalating militant activism with skinhead gangs as the main type of perpetrator. As shown in Figure 7, the characteristic attack in the years 2000-2004 was the pogrom, with large groups of skinheads descending on marketplaces, migrant dormitories, and left-wing concerts. Notably, two major pogroms hit Moscow's outdoor markets in 2001. The first, in April, involved as many 300 attackers armed with knives, metal bars, and sticks. At least ten persons were severely injured and hospitalized; dozens of stalls and kiosks were destroyed. Another pogrom, in October 2001, first targeted a marketplace near the Tsaritsyno metro station. The violence soon spread to other metro stations and to a hostel housing Afghan refugees. At least 300 skinheads reportedly took part in the attack, killing four persons and injuring 80.[17]

In a 2002 edition of the neo-Nazi samizdat magazine *Gnev Peruna* [The Wrath of Perun], a leading activist wrote an article defending the pogrom as a form of political activism. Apparently, some critics inside the movement had thought it a misguided tactic, indiscriminate, often harming ordinary Russians. Not so, argued "Schulz", who saw pogroms (and similar "smashing actions") as "fitting in with the concept of direct action—right-wing terror". Moreover, "our hearts become filled with joy [...] when Russian youth demonstrate their healthy, aggressive instincts." [18] While the skinheads' violence at this point would usually be interpreted as a form of "hooliganism" by Russian media and courts of law, it is interesting to note that leaders of early-2000s skinhead groups explicitly saw themselves as engaged in a campaign of terrorism and direct action.

The Tsaritsyno pogrom in particular received wide coverage in the Russian media, leading to the establishment of a special police department for combating youth extremism, a problem that authorities had largely denied or played down so far.[19] While journalists framed the perpetrators as hooligans, misfits, degenerates, and generally the scum of society, their reports likely also had the unintended effect of attracting new adherents to the movement—for the right-wing militants, all PR was good PR. According to some estimates, the number of people active in the skinhead subculture increased from about two thousand in 1999 to thirty-five or forty thousand in 2002, then making another jump to seventy thousand by 2004.[20]

Phase Two (2004-2011): Enter Revolutionary Terrorism

The year 2004 marked an intensification of what became a major wave of right-wing violence in Russia (note, however, that part of the jump in registered events from 2003 to 2004 likely reflects the beginning of more systematic data gathering by the SOVA Center), peaking in 2008 and receding to pre-2004 levels by 2011. Of all the registered right-wing killing events in the entire eighteen-year period, 75% occurred during this phase. The period also witnessed the decline of traditional skinhead gangs and the large-scale pogrom as an attack form, as well as the emergence of better organized groups of perpetrators, including smaller, clandestine groups engaging in a leaderless resistance-style of revolutionary terrorism (see Figure 5). Tactics became more diversified, with IEDs and firearms supplementing the (still popular) cold weapons and unarmed attacks (see Figure 6).

A combination of factors brought on the radicalization of right-wing militancy in this period, and central among them was ideological development.[21] Key activists began to make the case for revolutionary terrorism. In a 2004 edition of the extreme-right zine *Russkaia Volia* (Russian Will), one of the most influential of its kind and distributed widely in extreme-right milieus across the country, an article appeared entitled "Theory of Revolutionary Terror (A Guide to Action)". It was signed by "Max18", later to be revealed as Maksim Bazylev. Bazylev had joined the skinhead movement in the late 1990s and would later play a key role in the National Socialist Society (NSO), one of the most murderous neo-Nazi organizations of post-Soviet Russia, before he died while in pre-trial detention in 2009. His article featured a detailed argumentation in favor of revolutionary terrorism that went as follows: 1) The Russian state is pursuing policies that run counter to the interests of the Russian people, policies that result in an artificial decrease in the native population and their replacement by alien ethnic groups; thus, a change of power is the only solution. 2) A nationally oriented opposition movement may theoretically gain power by legal means. 3) In the authoritarian police state of Putin's Russia, however, such legal means of gaining power have been closed off. 4) Therefore, revolutionary struggle is the most promising

way forward, with activists destabilizing the regime by way of political terror and propaganda.[22]

In his piece, which was “particularly recommended for copying and distributing”, posted on the web, and reprinted in other neo-Nazi zines,[23] Bazylev called on activists to engage in terrorism to destabilize the state, to sow fear among the nation’s enemies, and, most importantly, as a means of propaganda—to popularize revolutionary ideas through violence (“propaganda of the deed”). Because centralized structures would not be able to escape the watchful eyes of the police state, Bazylev recommended a decentralized form of activism. As he reiterated in a 2005 interview with another extreme-right journal, the national struggle in Russia would take shape “as a decentralized partisan movement, represented by autonomous groups of enthusiasts who carry out acts of propaganda and terrorism.”[24] Bazylev was no doubt inspired by American white nationalist Louis Beam’s writings on the strategy of leaderless resistance. He also cited the Brazilian left-wing revolutionary Carlos Marighella, author of the *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla* (1969), and referred to the Iraqi insurgency against the U.S.-led presence there as an example of how a movement with an amorphous structure can harass and destabilize an occupation power.

When Bazylev called for revolutionary terrorism in 2004, he was tapping into, and reinforcing, an already developing current rather than setting off something entirely new. Already the year before, in 2003, the first serious, clandestine right-wing terrorist group had been formed in St. Petersburg, the so-called BTO, or Combat Terrorist Organization. Its members purposefully shed the typical skinhead uniform, refrained from using mobile phones and metro smart cards to avoid detection, planned their actions carefully, obtained and used firearms, and robbed post offices to finance their activities.[25] In the course of 2004, several high-profile attacks occurred. In May, an assassination attempt targeted a federal judge presiding over a case against members of a neo-Nazi group; in June, BTO activists assassinated Nikolai Girenko, an expert witness in several trials against right-wing extremists; in August, another federal judge, also presiding over a neo-Nazi case, was assassinated.[26] Bazylev’s article, then, offered ideological justification, direction, and purpose for an already emerging trend. Much of the violence in the Phase Two years appeared to follow the recipe described in the “Theory of Revolutionary Terror”.

Ideological radicalization within the movement was fueled by developments in the larger social and political environment. Grievances related to migration from Central Asia and the Caucasus continued to intensify in the mid-2000s. As the Russian economy improved, the number of officially registered labor migrants surged from 213,000 in 2000 to 460,000 in 2004, peaking at 2.4 million in 2008.[27] A sizable number of illegal migrants should be added on top of these figures. In 2008, Moscow officials stated that as many as 3 million illegal migrants might be residing in the capital alone.[28] The increasing presence of ethnic others, along with major terrorist attacks (e.g., the Moscow theater hostage crisis in 2002 and the Moscow metro bombings in 2004) and other crimes attributed to migrants, fueled nationalist sentiment in the population at large and became a cause for mobilization on the militant right. By 2007, the Russian Interior Ministry was putting the number of skinheads at 100,000 or more, although figures such as these should be taken with a grain of salt.[29] At the same time, Putin’s authoritarian regime continued to close off opportunities for real political participation except for the “tamed” parliamentary opposition, leading many right-wing activists to the conclusion that revolutionary terrorism was the only way forward.[30]

While restrictive in the parliamentary sense, Russian politics in the mid-2000s simultaneously created a permissive environment for right-wing militants in a discursive sense—by exploiting ethnic hostility as an electoral resource. The party Rodina, for instance, in late 2005 ran a televised election campaign video with the message “let us clean Moscow of garbage”, obviously referring to migrants of non-Russian ethnicity. The SOVA Center concluded that “the December 2005 elections in Moscow demonstrated an unprecedented sharp growth of radical xenophobia in the Russian capital—and possibly, in the entire country.”[31] Perhaps not incidentally, the subsequent year saw a drastic increase in right-wing homicide events.

Ideological radicalization, large-scale immigration, and shrinking political space for oppositional nationalists amid a permissive discursive environment for extremists: this confluence of factors arguably goes a long way towards explaining the wave of violence that occurred in Phase Two.

In addition to ideology, migration, and politics, technology most likely mattered. The mid-2000s was a time of rapidly increasing internet penetration in Russia. According to Internet Live Stats, the number of internet users doubled from six million in 2002 (4% of the population) to twelve million in 2003, then doubling once more to twenty-five million in 2006, and so on.[32] Moreover, in the mid-2000s camera phones were becoming ubiquitous, with video recordings a simple affair. The first incidents of deadly right-wing violence in which perpetrators filmed their attacks began to appear around 2006, multiplying thereafter. Such recordings had a dual function: internally, they were a tool for enhancing one's status in the eyes of other activists or the wider milieu of right-wing militants. Externally, the clips would showcase extreme-right activism for a wider audience, thus constituting a technologically updated form of "propaganda of the deed". Beginning in 2006, a group called Format 18 began to collect and distribute such recordings (online as well as on DVDs).[33] These new opportunities for spreading violent propaganda and gaining a measure of "fame" were seized upon by many activists across the country.

Phase Three (2011-2018): Decline in Violence

By 2011 the annual number of violent events had dropped to pre-2004 levels, marking the beginning of the third phase. Two factors help explain the decline in violence. First, and most important, authorities began to deal more seriously and effectively with the issue of extreme-right violence. As the murders multiplied, sometimes targeting high-profile victims, police devoted more resources to tracking down the perpetrators. Toward the end of the 2010s, an increasing number of perpetrators were being arrested and put on trial; many were handed life sentences (in 2010, a record 297 violent perpetrators were convicted, up from 130 the year before and 65 in 2007).[34] As a result, the risk associated with engaging in right-wing violence grew.

Another salient factor appears to be that leading activists began to realize that killing "racial enemies" in the streets did not make their grievances go away. The militants could blow up a marketplace here, torch a police station there—but their actions did not destabilize the state. If the "theory of revolutionary terrorism" looked nice on paper, it certainly failed in practice.[35]

In the years after 2014, the level of violent events has remained low. To understand why, it is useful to consider the dynamics resulting from the 2014 events in Ukraine. The revolution in Kiev, the Russian invasion and occupation of Crimea, and the establishment of Russian-backed "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine led to a major split in the Russian nationalist movement as a whole. While one part supported the Russian intervention and bought into the Kremlin narrative of what was going on (an anti-Russian coup carried out by Ukrainian fascists), the other part interpreted the shift of power in Kiev as a "revolution of dignity" against a corrupt regime under Kremlin influence. Those who opposed the Russian intervention in Ukraine and called for a Maidan revolution in Moscow (these were usually the most radical nationalists, neo-Nazis and other militants) have encountered strong state pressure in the years after 2014, with several leaders jailed or forced into emigration. This likely helps explain the low level of activism after 2014, as measured both by the number of violent events and the size of nationalist demonstrations such as the annual Russian March. The violent intensity of the 2000s appears to have petered out.[36]

The East-West Variation: A Comparative Explanation

The historical explanation offered above goes a long way to answer the question of why the wave of right-wing violence in Putin's Russia occurred when it did. The findings presented in the first section raise another important question as well: Why have Russian right-wing militants operated so much more violently than their Western counterparts (see Figure 1)? Addressing this question calls for a comparative approach.

Attempts to explain cross-national variation in right-wing terrorism and violence have long been hampered by the lack of systematic, reliable, and comparable event data, but recent advances in the field have provided a new, and more solid, basis for comparison. In particular, Ravndal's qualitative comparative analysis of the RTV dataset yielded two combinations of factors, or "causal recipes", that appeared to produce high levels of right-

wing violence in Western European countries in the period 1990-2015. The first recipe, valid for Northern Europe, consisted of a combination of high immigration, low support for radical-right parties, and high public stigmatization of radical-right actors and opinions. In the second recipe, valid for Southern Europe, high violence levels resulted from a combination of socioeconomic hardship, authoritarian pasts, and extensive left-wing violence.[37] Ravndal's QCA analysis included only one regime type: Western European liberal democracies. Given that Russia is not a liberal democracy, we should not expect the case to fit neatly into the mentioned explanatory patterns. And indeed, as it turns out, none of the two "recipes" seems to explain the Russian case, even though some of the factors are applicable. A third, Russian recipe appears necessary.

A combination of four key factors arguably accounts for Russia's divergence vis-à-vis the West: Anocratic regime type, high violence levels in society, high immigration, and low social stigmatization of far-right views.

First, the regime type of Putin's Russia—neither an autocracy nor democracy, but rather an anocracy in which the government seriously skews the political playing field yet is not willing to crush all dissent—has been found to present "an ideal environment for terrorism". By contrast, terrorism occurs the least in both full democracies and in strict autocracies.[38] Second, Russia has more violence in general. Russian homicide rates (2010 figures) exceeded those of Western countries by a factor of ten to fifteen (note that the rate was even higher in the 1990s and early 2000s),[39] and estimated domestic violence rates strongly exceed those found in the West. The high rates reflect a society in which violence is more accepted and the threshold for using violence is lower.[40] Third, Putin's Russia saw high immigration from non-Slavic regions such as Central Asia and the Caucasus.[41] The tide of labor migrants in the mid-2000s was a key mobilizing issue for the extreme right; it is hard to imagine the wave of violence without it. Fourth, lower social stigmatization of extreme-right views such as racism limited the social costs of taking part in extreme-right activism: Russian activists generally did not expect to be scorned, attacked, and discredited for their views as much as their Western European counterparts did.[42] (Note that in Ravndal's Northern European causal recipe, high stigmatization helped produce more, not less, right-wing violence. Given the principle of equifinality (multiple paths leading to the same outcome),[43] such an apparent discrepancy should not be surprising.)

Conclusion

For a long time, research on terrorism and political violence failed to register post-Soviet Russia as a prominent case of right-wing terrorism. This article has tried to fill that gap by providing an overview of modus operandi and proposing two explanations to account for the wave of right-wing violence occurring in the 2000s and the higher level of such violence compared to Western countries.

Having introduced and analyzed the new RTV-RUSSIA dataset to explore the militants' modus operandi, three main findings deserve highlighting. First, Russian activists have operated much more violently compared to their counterparts in the United States and Western Europe. In Russia, for the period 2000-2017, the frequency of right-wing homicide events (per capita per year) exceed five-fold that of the U.S., four-fold that of Germany, and two-fold that of Sweden. Second, Russian activists have operated more purposefully, with premeditated attacks vastly outnumbering spontaneous ones. A third notable finding concerns perpetrator types. While gangs and unorganized groups, as in the case of Western Europe, have been the most common perpetrators, the overall share of lone actors has been much lower than in the West (even though it appears to have been rising in later years).

The data show that a wave of right-wing terrorism and violence occurred in Russia in the 2000s. The violence peaked in the late 2000s, and has remained at a low level since 2014. Why did this wave occur when it did? This question demanded a historical explanation, by which several factors were highlighted: the crisis-ridden 1990s and the rise of the skinhead subculture as a vital precondition; ethno-nationalist grievances related to the increasing influx of labor migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus; ideological radicalization among key activists; the Putin regime's closing off of political opportunities for oppositional nationalists; a permissive discursive environment for right-wing extremists; and rapidly increasing internet penetration along with the

availability of camera phones enabling activists to seek status and gain a wider audience by recording their deeds and sharing them online.

Why has Russia seen so much more right-wing violence compared to Western Europe in the period since 1990? This question prompted a comparative approach. Following Ravndal's recent research on cross-national variation of right-wing terrorism and violence in Western Europe, which suggested two different "causal recipes" valid for Northern and Southern Europe, this article has proposed a third recipe to explain the Russian divergence. The Russian recipe involves a combination of anocratic regime type (neither fully democratic nor totally repressive), a more brutalized society (Russia has much higher rates of homicide and domestic violence compared to Western countries), high immigration of ethnic "others", and relatively low public stigmatization of extreme-right views.

The explanations proposed above largely deal with macro-level factors. Yet the Russian case obviously also offers a wealth of empirical material to researchers interested in meso- and micro-level causes of right-wing terrorism and violence. Looking ahead, it should be the task of future research to delve deeper into the Russian situation, carrying out interviews with (former) activists, collecting court documents, studying activists' publications, and exploring other available sources in order to uncover the social, psychological, and ideological forces driving this phenomenon, bringing the findings to bear on the field's current theories and hypotheses.

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Notes

- [1] Major contributions by Tore Bjørgo and others arrived too early to be able to consider the Russian case, cf. Tore Bjørgo and Rob Witte, *Racist Violence in Europe* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1993); Tore Bjørgo, ed., *Terror from the Extreme Right* (London: Frank Cass, 1995). *The 2011 Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* includes a comprehensive bibliography with a separate subsection for Russia, but lists no entries dealing with right-wing violence. See Alex P. Schmid, (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (New York: Routledge, 2011). Moreover, searches for relevant keywords such as "Russia" and "right-wing" in the journals *Terrorism & Political Violence*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, and *Perspectives on Terrorism* yielded no relevant results except a single article by the current author.
- [2] See Mihai Varga, "How Political Opportunities Strengthen the Far Right: Understanding the rise in far-right militancy in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 4 (2008): 561–579; Richard Arnold, "'Thugs with Guns': Disaggregating 'Ethnic Violence' in the Russian Federation," *Nationalities Papers* 37, no. 5 (2009): 641–664; Richard Arnold, "Visions of Hate: Explaining Neo-Nazi Violence in the Russian Federation," *Problems of Post-Communism* 57, no. 2 (3 April 2010): 37–49; Richard Arnold, Matthew Light, and Gavin Slade, "Systematic racist violence in Russia between 'hate crime' and 'ethnic conflict,'" *Theoretical Criminology* 19, no. 2 (2015): 239–256; Alexander Verkhovsky, "Radical Nationalists from the Start of Medvedev's Presidency to the War in Donbas: True till Death?" in *The New Russian Nationalism*, ed. by Pal Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrud (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 75–103; Mihai Varga, "Russia's Far-Right Violence Wave: Tracing the Development of Terror in a National-Socialist Organization," *Problems of Post-Communism* (2017). Online first <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2017.1389613>: 1–11.
- [3] See <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/>.
- [4] Jacob Aasland Ravndal, "Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe: Introducing the RTV Dataset," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no. 3 (14 June 2016).
- [5] The SOVA database is accessible at <http://www.sova-center.ru/database/>. While systematic data gathering began in 2004, the database includes a number of entries for 2003 as well. For the years 2000–2002, the author has relied on information gathered from secondary literature and news reports.
- [6] U.S. figures are taken from the U.S. Extremist Crime Database. See Joshua D. Freilich et al., "Introducing the United States Extremist Crime Database (ECDB)," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 2 (April 2014): 372–384.

- [7] For Western Europe figures, see Ravndal, “Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe”.
- [8] This article employs the same definitions of perpetrator types as Ravndal’s RTV dataset, namely: “(1) perpetrators acting on behalf of organized groups (known entities with five or more members whose association primarily relies on a strong commitment to right-wing politics), (2) affiliated members of organized groups acting on their own, (3) autonomous cells (clandestine entity of two to four members whose association primarily relies on a strong commitment to right-wing politics), (4) gangs (informal constellations of three or more acquaintances with a general right-wing commitment, but whose loose association primarily relies on social bonds, e.g. skinhead gangs and racist youth gangs), (5) unorganized perpetrators (two or more perpetrators with no known association to any specific right-wing group, cell, or gang), (6) lone actors (single perpetrators who prepare and sometimes also carry out attacks without anyone else knowing about it beforehand), and (7) shadow groups (unresolved attacks claimed by formerly unknown groups).”
- [9] “Racial enemies” include people from Central Asia and the Caucasus (for Russia), black people, Gypsy/Roma, Jews, individuals of non-Slavic appearance (for Russia), and the category of immigrant/foreigner/asylum seeker/refugee.
- [10] The most common perpetrators of physical antisemitic violence (certainly most killings) in Western Europe in the past 15 years have been men of Muslim backgrounds, not right-wing extremists. See Johannes Due Enstad, *Antisemitic Violence in Europe, 2005-2015. Exposure and Perpetrators in France, UK, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Russia* (Oslo: Center for Research on Extremism/Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, 2017).
- [11] See Ravndal, “Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe,” 12; Katie Worth, “Lone Wolf Attacks Are Becoming More Common—And More Deadly,” *Frontline*, 14 July 2016; URL: <https://perma.cc/5HGU-BYSP>.
- [12] See “Podrostok-neonatsist gotovil terakt v Moskve,” NEWSru.com, 11 June 2009; URL: <https://perma.cc/2LYC-A7XH>; “Popytka podryva restorana McDonald’s,” SOVA Center, 19 January 2009; URL: <https://perma.cc/76LX-9WG2>; “Vynesen prigovor po delu protiv liderov i aktivistov NNP,” SOVA Center, 20 November 2013; URL: <https://perma.cc/SH8D-HK6D>.
- [13] Karen Stenner, *The Authoritarian Dynamic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- [14] Mark Bassin, *The Gumilev Mystique: Biopolitics, Eurasianism, and the Construction of Community in Modern Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 244–245.
- [15] See G. V. Osipov and L. L. Rybakovskii (Eds.), *Demograficheskoe razvitie Rossii v XXI veke* (Moscow: Ekon-Inform, 2009), chapter 4.2, available at URL: <https://perma.cc/NM7E-7FHX>.
- [16] See Viktor Shnirelman, “Ariiskaia Ideologii i Identichnost Skinkhedov,” *Skepsis*, 2010; URL: <https://perma.cc/RQ55-R675>.
- [17] Aleksandr Tarasov, “Natsi-skiny v sovremennoi Rossii,” *Skepsis*, 2004; URL: <https://perma.cc/RK9A-QXQA>; Viktor Shnirelman, “Rasovaia voina’ na gorodskikh ulitsakh,” *Skepsis*, 2010; URL: <https://perma.cc/MKF9-PJ9H>; “Pogromy na moskovskikh rynkakh,” *Memorial*, n.d.; URL: <https://perma.cc/V7RF-D9HU>.
- [18] “Khuliganstvo i Pogromy,” *Gnev Peruna* 5 (2002), 3.
- [19] See Tarasov, “Natsi-Skiny v Sovremennoi Rossii”.
- [20] Hilary Pilkington, Albina Garifzianova, and E. L. Omelchenko, *Russia’s Skinheads: Exploring and Rethinking Subcultural Lives* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 8–9.
- [20] Here I concur with Mihai Varga, who similarly stresses the strategic choices of militant leaders for explaining the uptick in violence. See Varga, “Russia’s Far-Right Violence Wave”.
- [22] Max18, “Teoriia Revoliutsionnogo Rerrora (Rukovodstvo k Deistviu),” *Russkaia volia* 8 (2004): 2-15.
- [23] E.g., *Straight Edge: Shtorm Chistoi Krovi* (2004).
- [24] “Interviu s redaksiiei zhurnala ‘Russkaia volia,’” *Beloe povolzhe* 1 (2005): 14.
- [25] Petr Sidorov, “Beshenye psy Peterburga,” *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 2 June 2006; URL: <https://perma.cc/EN4Z-7XNL>.
- [26] “Pokushenie na sudiu v Dolgoprudnom,” SOVA Center, 25 May 2004; URL: <https://perma.cc/4QSI-G3JD>; “Ubiistvo Nikolaia Girenko v Sankt-Peterburge,” SOVA Center, 19 June 2004; URL: <https://perma.cc/Z9H8-UPMP>; “Ubiistvo sudi v Dolgoprudnom,” SOVA Center, 9 August 2004; URL: <https://perma.cc/DPL2-82JE>.
- [27] See table 5.14 in the *Russian Statistical Yearbook* for 2009, available at URL: <https://perma.cc/H2ZR-7PW7>.
- [28] “Chislo Nelegalnykh Immigrantov v Moskve Sostavliaet uzhe Chetvert Naseleniia Stolitsy,” *Ekho Moskvy*, 1 April 2008; URL: <https://perma.cc/9DL6-VAM9>.

- [29] Pilkington, Garifzianova, and Omelchenko, Russia's skinheads, 8-9.
- [30] Varga, "How Political Opportunities Strengthen the Far Right". See also Dmitrii Demushkin's statement about repressive politics driving activists into the violent underground in Peter Finn, "Moscow Killings Blamed on Racism," *Washington Post*, 8 April 2008; URL: <https://perma.cc/5YPW-QA95>.
- [31] See Galina Kozhevnikova, "Radical Nationalism and Efforts to Oppose it in Russia in 2005," SOVA Center, 25 February 2006; URL: <https://perma.cc/P4RY-862A>. On the lower level of social stigma attached to extreme-right opinions in Russia, see Johannes Due Enstad, "'Glory to Breivik!': The Russian Far Right and the 2011 Norway Attacks," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29, no. 5 (2017): 781-783.
- [32] "Russia Internet Users," Internet Live Stats, n.d.; URL: <https://perma.cc/3A49-HDXB>.
- [33] See Vladimir Pribylovskii, "Format-18," *Antikompromat*, n.d.; URL: <https://perma.cc/H7E7-98CR>.
- [34] Statistics on convictions have been compiled by the SOVA Center, see URL: <https://perma.cc/C7HP-ZYH9>.
- [35] Verkhovsky, "Radical Nationalists from the Start of Medvedev's Presidency to the War in Donbas: True till Death?" 84.
- [36] Vera Alperovich, "Eto Fiasko, Gospoda. Dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov letom-oseniu 2017 goda," SOVA Center, 26 December 2017; URL: <https://perma.cc/94P6-L66B>.
- [37] Jacob Aasland Ravndal, "Explaining Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe: Grievances, opportunities and polarisation," *European Journal of Political Research* 57, no. 4 (2018): 845-866.
- [38] Khusrav Gaibullov, James A. Piazza, and Todd Sandler, "Regime Types and Terrorism," *International Organization* 71, no. 3 (2017): 497.
- [39] "Intentional homicides (per 100,000 people)," The World Bank; URL: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5>.
- [40] For substantiation, see Enstad, "'Glory to Breivik!'" 783-784.
- [41] See Ekaterina Shcherbakova, "Migratsiia v Rossii, itogi pervogo polugodiia 2017 goda," *Demoskop Weekly* 743-744 (2017): 22. See also the yearbooks published by Russia's Federal State Statistics Service at URL: http://gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat/main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc_1135087342078.
- [42] See Enstad, "Glory to Breivik!" 781-783.
- [43] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 2005), 63.

‘Only Bullets will Stop Us!’ – The Banning of National Action in Britain

by Graham Macklin

Abstract

This article explores the banning of National Action (NA), a small, violent national-socialist group, which, in December 2016, became the first extreme right-wing group proscribed by a British government since 1940. It charts how NA evolved from public order irritant to its designation as a ‘terrorist’ group. Following a short overview of NA’s history and politics, and the circumstances in which the government banned it, the article assesses the ban’s impact upon its activists and milieu. Several subsequent trials have highlighted the ban’s success in dismantling NA as an organization. However, this case study also suggests that it has engendered a period of ideological and organisational adaption as former activists sought out new modes and methods of activism to enable them to circumvent the ban, highlighting the tactical flexibility of extreme right militancy. In line with the wider literature, this case study finds that although the ban succeeded in deterring some activists, others remained defiant, continuing to operate clandestinely until the police disrupted their activities. The article concludes with a discussion of where the ban has been less successful, highlighting the protracted difficulties faced by the authorities in eradicating NA’s digital footprint – one of the aims of banning the group in the first place, since the tools to do so lie with social media conglomerates and are thus largely beyond government control.

Keywords: National Action, extreme right, terrorism, political violence, proscription

Introduction

There is an ongoing academic debate regarding the extent to which ostracizing or banning groups moderates or radicalizes their supporters; does resorting to such legal instruments make matters better or worse? In essence, is proscription an effective counter measure against terrorist and extremist organisations?[1] Have bans on extreme right-wing groups reduced mobilization, or simply provoked solidarity and resistance, thereby exacerbating the very tendencies that governments are trying to prevent? Studies of the German case, for instance, indicate that the failed effort to ban the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands served only to increase the organizational and strategic flexibility of the extra-parliamentary extreme right whilst also hardening its ideology and ghettoization.[2]

This article explores such hypotheses regarding the impact of banning extreme right-wing groups with reference to a case study of National Action (NA), a small, overtly national socialist, youth-oriented, *groupuscule*, which in December 2016 became the first extreme right-wing group banned by the British Government since 1940. NA, which was founded in 2013, was proscribed under section 3(3)(a) of the Terrorism Act (2000), hitherto used principally against a plethora of Islamist and Irish Republican groups. As such, it was the first extreme right-wing group in British history designated as a ‘terrorist’ organization even though the group itself had not carried out a ‘terrorist’ act *per se*. Indeed, one early scholarly analysis published in 2014 concluded that ‘National Action activists like to hype themselves as genuine threats to the state. Yet despite being unwaveringly fascist and National Socialist in political orientation, and idealizing violence online, in itself the *groupuscule* – to date – is in no position to develop its revolutionary agenda, and seems wary of carrying out violent acts too.’[3]

That being the case, this article explores how NA evolved from public order irritant to its designation as a ‘terrorist’ group. It provides a short overview of NA’s history and politics, the circumstances under which the government banned the group and the outcome of the ban. Whilst proscription successfully dismantled NA as an organization, this article also finds that its impact was similar to bans on extreme right organisations in Germany. It engendered a period of ideological and organisational experimentation and adaption as those

activists undeterred by the ban sought out new modes and methods of activism through which to circumvent it, highlighting the tactical flexibility of extreme right militancy. In line with the broader literature, the case study also finds that whilst the ban succeeded in deterring some activists, others carried on regardless. Equally importantly, with regard to the successful enforcement of repressive measures, the article highlights the protracted difficulties faced by police and politicians in eradicating NA's digital footprint, one of the aims of banning it in the first place, when the tools to do so lie largely beyond their control.

Precursors

NA emerged in early 2013, following the implosion of the extreme right British National Party (BNP) and the similarly sharp decline experienced by the English Defence League (EDL), an anti-Muslim street movement. The genesis of the group is located in the activities of two individuals, Benjamin Raymond and Alex Davies. Raymond, a former politics student harbored views that were extreme by any measure: 'There are non-whites and Jews in my country who all need to be exterminated. As a teenager, *Mein Kampf* changed my life. I am not ashamed to say I love Hitler,' he wrote in one internet post.[4] By 2005, he was attending meetings of the 'New Right', an esoteric 'meta-political' lecture group.[5] Discontented with their activities, Raymond focused his energies upon the Integralist Party of Great Britain (IP). Given the demands of full-time education, he prioritized online activities including its website, publications, and a range of blogs, as a means of developing and disseminating his ideas, many derivative of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists.[6]

IP was politically insignificant in itself, but served as an organizational and ideological crucible for the formation of NA. IP's digital presence brought likeminded activists together. Through IP, Raymond met Alex Davies, a sixteen year-old Young BNP (YBNP) activist who became the group's 'principal organizer.' He held similar anti-Semitic views as Raymond: 'I don't want to say what I'd like to do to Jews – it's too extreme.' The BNP's 'disarray' perturbed Davies, as did the inertia of the extreme right movement in general.[7] Other future NA activists met online too, coming from websites like 4chon.net, an image board site notable for its racist and anti-Semitic posts which had been established in 2011 after the 4chan website expunged its /new/ (news) section.[8]

During this same period, Raymond's personal online activities expanded. As 'Benjamin Noyles' he was an administrator on the IronMarch.org (IM), an extreme right forum founded in September 2011 whose masthead declared 'GAS THE KIKES, RACE WAR NOW, 1488 BOOTS ON THE GROUND!' IM became an increasingly important transatlantic outlet for violent activism. Whilst IP served as a meeting place for several future NA leaders, digital activism also served to facilitate their ideological radicalization. Raymond, who honed his own graphic skills whilst promoting IP, likened the image board culture to Social Darwinism, which extinguishes 'weaker' messages and narratives: 'It's only the extremes that come forward,' he stated, reflecting upon a process of ideological outbidding which clearly influenced the future trajectory of the group.[9]

National Action – Ideology and Action

Raymond credits Davies as NA's founder, stating that he became involved after Davies asked him to author a strategy document regarding the requirements needed for a new political group to succeed.[10] Their analysis of the BNP's failure was a 'major factor' informing subsequent efforts to 'rebrand' racial nationalism.[11] Younger than many activists, Raymond, Davies, and their colleagues sought to carve out a 'space' for militant youth within an increasingly decentralized and fragmented 'movement'. From the outset, NA differentiated itself from other groups, ideologically as well as tactically. Posturing as a revolutionary national socialist group, they consciously conceived of themselves as a youth-oriented 'vanguard' movement whose role, as political and spiritual elites, was to channel 'hatred and rage' and to 'use it to shatter the decaying power of the enemy.'[12]

The ideological inspirations for NA militancy, its glorification of Nazism, open racism and anti-Semitism, were contrary to the 'modern' BNP whose organisers had sublimated their own ideological militancy behind a veneer of anti-Muslim 'national populism' and an electoral strategy influenced by the localism of the Liberal

Democrats. This was ideologically insipid when compared with figures like ‘Tesak’ – Maxim Sergeyevich Martsinkevich, leader of violent Format 18 group – and White Rex, a Russian mixed martial arts promotor and clothing brand with extreme right sympathies, venerated by Raymond. He also admired groups like CasaPound in Italy though he found it ‘ideologically questionable’ because he viewed it as being evasive about its core beliefs. These groups provided a model for emulation; a recipe for reinvigorating a British milieu which, after following an electoral route for fifteen years, viewed street activism as something ‘alien’ to its culture.[13] The failure of the BNP’s ‘quest for legitimacy’ amplified NA’s efforts to appear as a dynamic alternative. They appeared oblivious to the irony that the ‘moderate’ BNP strategy they disdained derived from an analysis of the utter failure of previous waves of overt national socialist politicking.

Eschewing the ballot box, early NA activism concentrated upon militant street action: leafletting, banner drops, and ‘flash’ demonstrations largely, though not exclusively, gravitating upon the West Midlands. NA carried out some of these actions in tandem with activists from the British Movement, a small national socialist *groupuscule* founded in 1968 by British national socialist ideologue, Colin Jordan. Mirroring the strategy pursued by the ‘Alt Right’ in the United States, NA staged a series of headline grabbing actions on British university campuses, helping to establish its name. Notably they also interrupted a lecture by Trotskyite intellectual, Alex Callincos, at Warwick University where Alex Davies was a student, though media exposure of his activities soon ended his studies.

Within six months of the group’s foundation, Raymond could boast that NA ‘has succeeded in turning a web-based idea into an authentic real world organization.’ This included honing its ‘brand’ by presenting a distinct style and visual aesthetic at demonstrations with activists dressed in black, with sunglasses or half skull masks. This was not necessarily novel. NA imbibed much of its aesthetic appeal from the ‘autonomous’ national socialist movement in Germany which in turn had adopted and adapted many of the stylistic accoutrements of the anarchist Black Bloc movement. NA used its distinctive identity to build its appeal and, Raymond noted, to assist young activists evade the attention of the Prevent counter-terrorism programme. ‘People were attracted to the look of the organization,’ stated Raymond, who was responsible for many of groups’ graphics. ‘We embraced quite a lot of modern aesthetics, which is something that modern organizations have failed to catch up on.’[14]

It was an anti-Semitic ‘trolling’ campaign launched in August 2014 by Liverpool-based NA activist Garron Helm, against the Jewish Labour MP Luciana Berger, which put NA on the map, however. Helm received a four-week jail sentence after tweeting Berger a picture of herself with a Star of David superimposed on her head with the hashtag #HitlerWasRight. Helm’s imprisonment led the US Daily Stormer website to orchestrate an international ‘trolling’ campaign against Berger. She was subsequently deluged with over 2,500 anti-Semitic tweets, many using the hashtag #FilthyJewBitch.[15] Police subsequently arrested ten NA activists, thwarting a planned demonstration outside Berger’s office.[16] Unperturbed, NA continued its intimidation of Berger, publishing an article entitled ‘Reap the whirlwind’ on its website together with an interview with an unrepentant Helm. Notably, NA also injected this anti-Semitic invective into its street activities, including during a demonstration in Leeds (described as ‘an absolute shoah’) and the desecration of a Jewish monument in Birmingham, which was filmed and placed online. In speeches activists railed against the ‘disease of international Jewry’ whilst promising ‘When the time comes they’ll be in the chambers.’[17]

NA gained significant attention in January 2015 when Zack Davies, 26, from Mold, Flintshire, attempted to murder Sikh dentist, Dr. Sarandeep Bhambra Sandip, with a machete outside a supermarket whilst shouting ‘White Power’ and ‘this is for Lee Rigby’ – a reference to the fusilier murdered by jihadists outside his barracks in London. The intervention of a former soldier saved Sandip’s life. Davies told police he was an NA member, though Raymond publicly denied knowledge of him.[18] Davies had been active, however, on the IM forum using the name ‘Rockerz88’. Following his arrest IM changed his status to ‘gassed.’ Davies was jailed for fourteen years.[19]

Whilst NA made common cause with like-minded groups (Davies participated in several events organized by the London Forum for instance), its relationship with others was uneasy. NA staged a ‘Step it up White Man’

demonstration against 'grooming' (child sexual exploitation) by gangs of, largely, Muslim men in September 2014 and thereafter several NA activists took part in a 'unity' demonstration in Rotherham, South Yorkshire; a town where social services estimated that perhaps as many as 1,400 young girls had been abused. NA were unimpressed by the personal conduct of many EDL members, some of whom were inebriated or on drugs. The waving of Israeli flags by EDL activists particularly offended NA's anti-Semitic sensibilities, leading them to declare, 'weakness on the Jewish question is simply unforgivable, ignorance is inexcusable.' NA and EDL activists physically clashed at a subsequent Rotherham demonstration in July 2015.[20]

Increasingly, NA were emboldened to move beyond small 'flash' demonstrations to organize larger scale activities. The first was the 'White Man March' in Newcastle in March 2015, which ended in nine arrests. This was notable for the presence of an alleged recruiter for the ultra-nationalist Ukrainian Azov brigade, interesting in itself given NA's pro-Ukrainian stance.[21] In August, they alighted upon Liverpool as the site for a further 'White Man March', sending a menacing letter to the city mayor that Liverpool 'will go up in flames' if the march was prohibited. 'Only bullets will stop us!' they declared.[22] In fact, the demonstration was a humiliating defeat for NA. Confronted by scores of angry opponents, police locked the small NA contingent inside a left-luggage facility in Liverpool Lime Street Station for their own protection, which ended their march before it began.[23] NA announced two subsequent Liverpool marches, both of which failed to materialize, before they traveled back to the city, unannounced, for what amounted to a photoshoot.

These failures broadly corresponded to a ratcheting up of the group's rhetoric. The same month as the initial Liverpool demonstration took place, the group uploaded a video to its YouTube channel calling for 'White Jihad' – partly a satirical publicity stunt but also a declaration, 'that we are open challengers to the system, that we are world changers, that our faith is as strong as any religion, and that we have staked our claim...Everything we need to become the rebellion of the age is already in place; the fear, the glamour, the terror, the presence, it is all there for the taking, all that is left it for us to embrace it.'[24] NA activists returned to Newcastle in January 2016 to stage a deliberately provocative '#HitlerWasRight!' demonstration, coinciding with Holocaust Memorial Day.

NA membership, which numbered approximately 100 activists organized into regional groups, was, by its own admission, 'most concentrated' in the North West of the country. Here it allied itself with the North West Infidels (NWI), an extreme right splinter from the EDL, with whom it staged a joint-demonstration on 25 February in Liverpool in a bid to avenge their earlier humiliation. This also ended amidst considerable disorder and led to six arrests.[25] The debacle highlighted the limits of confrontational racist street activism. That same day Western Spring, a blog offering political guidance to the milieu, operated by a former BNP organiser, posted an article entitled 'You Say You Want Revolution' in which its author argued that, whilst demonstrations provided necessary 'battlefield experience,' more often than not they were counter-productive and 'do not have the potential to bring about political revolution.'[26]

NA ignored the entreaty, attending NWI demonstrations in Blackpool, Edinburgh and Rochdale in the following months. Activists north of the border meanwhile allied themselves with the Scottish Defence League (SDL), another overtly racist EDL splinter. NA continued its own provocative activities, holding another '#HitlerWasRight' demonstration outside York Minster, which ended with five arrests.[27] The group staged several other headline grabbing stunts including a 'Miss Hitler' competition that attracted worldwide media coverage.[28] Activists also generated publicity by distributing racist stickers declaring certain areas a 'white zone' mirroring an Islamist tactic of declaring certain areas 'Sharia zones' which had generated similar outrage. Perhaps its most high profile provocation, however, was a visit to Germany in May 2016 where several activists took, and posted online, photographs of themselves Sieg Heiling inside an 'execution room' at Buchenwald concentration camp.[29]

Privately, NA were also staging activities that heightened official concern. In August 2014, NA activists undertook outdoor physical training exercises in the Brecon Beacons. These were organized jointly by Sigurd Legion, led by physical fitness trainer Craig Fraser; White Rex, the Russian mixed martial arts organisation led by Denis Nikitin; and the Western Spring blog.[30] Whilst physical activity was key, Western Spring also

highlighted the opportunities for ‘networking, and the promotion of camaraderie and bonds of kinship within the tribe’ afforded by these events.[31]

Shortly after the camp, Fraser addressed a meeting in Oxford on 13 September, alongside Finnish extreme right activist Kai Murros, introducing the ethos underpinning the Sigurd camps. Expanding on his future training, Fraser stated: ‘One of the videos we’re going to show at the next Sigurd camp, we’re going to get a projector up and project a jihadis training for ISIS over in Syria, showing them how they train.’ Murros replied ‘The irony is that we actually need a jihad.’[32] Fraser, who viewed his outdoor training regimen as ‘apocalypse training,’ had authored *The Centurion Method Training Manual*, which stated:

Violence is the key to manhood, a man who cannot do violence, either to himself, his comrades or his enemies is a dead man. Practice violence then, harm yourself, experience pain, practice the traditions of the day, learn to hunt, to kill, to maim and to dominate in battle. If the laws of the land forbid it, learn what you can within the confines of the law, fight your brothers in the streets of your native lands, become hard, Nietzsche says again become *hard* in all ways. *Worship of hardness in any form, emotional, physical, spiritual.*[33]

Following media exposure, Fraser stepped down from Sigurd for ‘personal reasons’ and the group was rebranded as Legion Martial Arts Club (MAC).[34] Legion MAC promoted ‘national improvement through self-improvement’ striving ‘to embody the Promethean spirit which is the hallmark of our people.’ It described those involved in its training programmes thus: ‘A Legionnaire is a man of destiny whose path leads him inexorably to take on new challenges, scale new personal heights and become an avatar for our people in an age of decay.’[35] NA activists continued attending Legion MAC camps; there were at least four more. Such training cascaded downwards to local cadres with local groups organizing their own ‘fitness and combat’ camps including Mixed Martial Arts and other social activities. Given the philosophical centrality of violence to such gatherings these activities quickly gained political attention.[36]

From July 2015 onwards, the NA website featured a series of articles by Fenek Solère entitled ‘Political Soldier Redux,’ which valorized the group’s youthful activism as that of a ‘warrior generation’ inculcating the belief that they alone were facing up to ‘the inevitable sacrifices required to free Europe from the dark forces that have dominated our continent for decades.’[37] Solère’s spiritually infused text had obvious parallels with Derek Holland’s seminal text of the same name, which had inspired the national revolutionary faction of the National Front during the 1980s.

‘Death to Traitors, Freedom for Britain’

On 16 June 2016, Thomas Mair, an extreme right activist, stabbed and then shot Jo Cox, MP for Batley and Spen, West Yorkshire, as she arrived at her constituency surgery. She died from her injuries at the scene whilst Bernard Kelley, an elderly man who intervened to try to save her, was also seriously injured. Police apprehended Mair nearby. Whilst most groups distanced themselves from Mair’s heinous act, NA positively reveled in it; activists’ social media accounts glorified Cox’s killer as a ‘hero.’ The North East NA Twitter account menaced ‘only 649 MPs to go!’ accompanied by the hashtag #WhiteJihad. Another tweet, from the same account, featured a photograph of Mair, stated ‘#VoteLeave, don’t let this man’s sacrifice go in vain. #Jo Cox would have filled Yorkshire with more subhumans!’[38] Asked to confirm his name in court, Mair stated ‘Death to traitors, freedom for Britain.’ NA adopted his words, the only time Mair spoke following his arrest, as their slogan. Found guilty, the judge imposed a whole life sentence on Mair in November.[39]

The following month, on 12 December, the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, announced she would proscribe NA under section 3(3)(a) of the Terrorism Act (2000), meaning that being a member of, or inviting support for, the group, was now a criminal offence carrying a sentence of up to ten years’ imprisonment. This decision, taken ‘after extensive consideration and in light of a full assessment of available information,’ came into force on 16 December, following a Parliamentary debate the previous day. Rudd banned NA on grounds that it was

‘concerned with terrorism.’[40] There are currently seventy-four organisations proscribed by the British state under the Terrorism Act (2000); with fourteen Northern Irish groups proscribed under previous legislation. [41] This was not the first time an extreme right organization had been proscribed by the government. Mosley’s British Union was banned using executive powers granted by the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act on 10 July 1940.[42] This was the first time, however, that the government had banned an extreme right organization as a *terrorist* group. Whilst many commentators cited Mair’s killing of Jo Cox as the reason for the ban, considerations for the group’s proscription were already in motion prior to this event. The Home Secretary had been unable to place the matter before the House of Commons until after Mair’s trial had come to an end, for fear of prejudicing the outcome.

Though NA was ‘concerned with terrorism,’ the organization itself had never committed an act of ‘terrorism’ *per se*. Nor did the Home Office press release specify one. In part, Rudd’s statement focused on the moral rationale for banning the group i.e. its ‘vile ideology’ which ‘stirs up hatred.’ Operationally, however, she highlighted the group’s continued online glorification of terrorism, which ‘frequently features extremely violent imagery and language. National Action also promoted and encouraged acts of terrorism after Jo Cox’s murder.’[43] NA had also reveled in the massacre of forty-nine people at ‘Pulse,’ a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in June 2016, and also disseminated an image depicting a police officer having his throat slit. This was cited as further evidence of its violent proclivities.[44]

The broader aim of the ban was to eradicate the group’s ‘brand’ and ergo its youthful appeal. The Home Secretary was explicit on this point: ‘Proscribing it will prevent its membership from growing, stop the spread of poisonous propaganda and protect vulnerable young people at risk of radicalisation from its toxic views.’[45] The police too were increasingly concerned by the numbers of young people becoming either directly involved with the group or turning up on its periphery. Police figures recorded the arrest of twenty-two NA activists during 2016, several of them teenagers, including seventeen-year-old Jack Coulson who posted online that Thomas Mair was a ‘hero’. He was arrested with an improvised explosive device in Bradford, West Yorkshire. [46] Home Office figures, released in March 2017, reinforced this view. Arrests of extreme right-wing activists for terrorism offences had doubled since the previous year, reaching thirty-five in total.[47]

Whilst proscription ended NA abruptly, how did its activists respond? The sole academic study, conducted in the immediate aftermath of the ban, speculated that it might very well increase the group’s appeal, radicalizing it further, whilst simultaneously being ‘very easy’ to circumvent, leading to the conclusion that the proscription was ‘somewhat impotent, in that it will ban little more than its mere name.’[48] With the benefit of hindsight, however, this assessment was unduly pessimistic; overestimating the capabilities and commitment of NA activists to weather the storm, whilst also underestimating the authorities’ own commitment to dismantle the group, which transcended the mere ‘symbolic’ nature of banning the group, countering the accusation it was a ‘one-off’ response to the killing of Jo Cox. Indeed, as the remainder of this article highlights, police and politicians took seriously efforts by former activists to perpetuate the group and continue its political goals under a new guise.

Defying the Ban

Despite news of the ban leaking to the media in the days before its implementation, Ben Raymond publicly cast doubt on the prospect. When the government did ban NA, activists vented outrage and dismay across forums and social media. The immediate response was defiance and bravado. The final tweet from the London NA account read: ‘Proscription validates our cause. Wir kommen wieder [we will be back]’ accompanied by a quote from Adolf Hitler ‘Obstacles do not exist to be surrendered to, but only to be broken.’[49] Individual activists were equally dismissive. ‘I thought being a “terrorist” would be interesting. Who knew that nothing would change?’ bragged one NA activist the day after the ban, ending with the hashtag #NSForever.[50]

Secretly, the NA leadership had already begun preparing to defy the ban, however, holding a secure conference call with their regional organisers prior to proscription coming into force. Christopher Lythgoe, the North

West NA leader who had emerged as a central figure within the group insisted they carry on. Emailing regional leaders shortly afterwards, Lythgoe instructed:

Make sure you maintain contact with ALL your members. Reassure them that they will be personally ok as long as they don't promote NA from Friday on. Make sure that they understand that the SUBSTANCE of NA is the people, our talents, the bonds between us, our ideas, and our sustained force of will. All of that will continue in the future. We're just shedding one skin for another. All genuinely revolutionary movements in the past have needed to exist partly underground. These are exiting times.[51]

Less than two hours after receiving the email, Alex Deakin, the NA West Midlands leader, created a chat group using the encrypted messaging app Telegram in order to covertly communicate with activists after the ban. He called it 'Triple KKK Mafia'. The group had twenty-one adherents whilst a second, more select, chat group called 'Inner' had seven participants. Their clandestine communications, which called for 'race war' and discussed murdering those they hated, only 'intensified' after proscription. This Telegram group, however, would prove the group's undoing.[52]

The day NA became illegal, Raymond emailed to several contacts, including Lythgoe and Deakin, stating that he was 'super excited about working on all the new projects' which included designing visual propaganda for a post-ban formation. Raymond allegedly envisaged the formation of a National Socialist Network (NSN), believing that a new body acting as 'a fluid part of the wider "movement" and not a specific entity' could circumvent the ban.[53] The extreme Islamist group Al-Muhajiroun (AM) inspired Raymond's proposed restructuring. Rather than give up, after it voluntarily disbanded, under government pressure, on 4 October 2004, AM underwent numerous name changes. Whilst each successive group was banned, the structural adaptation that followed begat a more amorphous, milieu-focused activism, still loyal to, but de-centred, from its 'formal' leadership.[54] Raymond apparently conceived of a similarly diffuse role for the NSN, though his preparations to launch the initiative collapsed following anti-fascist exposure.[55]

In February 2017, Raymond, posted a first post-ban YouTube video defiantly entitled 'Defeat Never. Victory Forever.'[56] He subsequently uploaded a lecture to YouTube entitled a 'Nationalist Survival Guide – Arrest' advising activists on how to deal with being arrested, based on his own experience.[57] Though he had continued to actively communicate with other activists through encrypted emails and apps, including the West Midlands Telegram group, Raymond receded from public view. Alex Davies also withdrew from organizational activity, though he continued giving speeches as well as co-hosting the 'Radio Aryan' podcast.[58]

This clandestine activity went hand-in-hand with more overt efforts to continue NA activism. In March 2017, a new group, Scottish Dawn, appeared at a demonstration organized by the anti-Muslim SDL in Alloa, Scotland. This small group carried distinctive yellow flags featuring the Life Rune symbol. They participated in another SDL demonstration the following month. Investigative journalists secretly filmed one of its activists confessing that 'National Action were a good organisation and the stuff we do is very similar.'[59] Several new initiatives that same month further reinforced perceptions of renewed political activity by former NA activists. A website and accompanying YouTube channel for National Socialist Anti-Capitalist Action (NS131) went live online on 12 June as 'a platform dedicated to promoting and spreading NS street art and physical propaganda,' which perpetuated the visual style and aesthetic 'brand' of NA.[60]

The banning of NA and its subsidiaries raises an important question. Was it actually necessary to ban NA in order to dismantle it? For instance, prosecution of the leaders of the Aryan Strike Force, culminating in the jailing of Ian Davidson in 2010 for possessing the toxin ricin – enough to kill nine people – had led that group to collapse without recourse to its proscription.[61] Indeed, even without the ban, which forced NA activists to start from scratch organizationally, legal action had already degraded its broader activist base. Throughout 2017, an almost monthly parade of activists began appearing before the courts, charged with numerous offences. These prosecutions also highlighted the range of legal remedies already available to the authorities in dealing with NA activity, particularly concerning inciting racial hatred or glorifying terrorism, beyond the exceptional measure of banning the organization itself.

Whilst these prosecutions affected NA adversely, they had less impact upon the wider extreme right-wing 'street' scene, which, having already lost momentum, was virtually moribund following a National Front demonstration in Dover in January 2016, which had ended amidst large-scale violent disorder. Police arrested eighty activists from a variety of groups in the days and months after the demonstration. Many received significant jail sentences, which also removed a number of key individuals from the milieu.[62] The repercussions of this event arguably had a greater deadening effect upon street activism than the NA ban.[63]

In the spring of 2017, police arrested the West Midlands NA leader Alex Deakin as part of an investigation into an incident the previous summer in which NA activists had plastered Aston University with 'White Zone' stickers. Police seized Deakin's phone thereby gaining access to the secret NA Telegram chat group and its incriminating messages. Deakin's self-confessed 'sloppiness' led to three separate though interlocking trials of NA activists for a range of offences, including membership of a proscribed group. Beginning in the autumn of 2017, police arrested over two dozen alleged NA activists. The first arrests took place on 5 September and involved four serving soldiers and a civilian employee who had participated in the Telegram group. Three of them later appeared in court. Lance Corporal Mikko Vehvilainen, a Christian Identity adherent obsessed with 'race war' and civilizational collapse, who had served in Afghanistan, received an eight-year sentence for NA membership. Deakin, convicted of two counts of possessing documents useful to someone preparing an act of terrorism and disseminating another ('Ethnic Cleansing Operations' which he emailed to Raymond and other NA contacts), also received eight years. The jury acquitted the third defendant, another serving soldier, though the Army subsequently discharged him.[64]

On 27 September, a further 11 activists were arrested, six of whom were subsequently charged with membership of a banned organization. Information from Hope Not Hate, the anti-fascist campaign group, who had an informant inside Lythgoe's North West NA group, reinforced the case, the group having already publicly highlighted that NA were using a converted warehouse in Warrington, Cheshire, to continue their activities in contravention of the ban.[65]

Police subsequently charged Jack Renshaw, a former YBNP activist, with conspiring to murder Labour MP Rosie Cooper with a machete and threatening to kill a police officer who had been investigating him for alleged child sex offences and inciting racial hatred. After he had killed the police officer, Renshaw's act of 'White Jihad' would have culminated in his wearing a fake suicide vest and committing 'suicide by cop' having made a martyrdom video stating he had committed the act on behalf of NA, the prosecution alleged.[66] Renshaw pled guilty to the terrorism charges on the first day of his trial. However, he denied seeking permission to kill Cooper on behalf of NA from Lythgoe, who was also on trial, claiming that the plot 'was on behalf of myself' and not NA which he also denied membership of.[67] Lythgoe was subsequently jailed for eight years but was found not guilty of encouraging Renshaw. The jury failed to reach a verdict regarding Renshaw's NA 'membership'. Following these verdicts reporting restrictions were lifted on Renshaw's conviction on two counts of inciting racial hatred during a separate trial.[68]

On 28 September, the day after this second tranche of arrests, Scottish Dawn and NS131 were both banned under section 3(6)(a) of the Terrorism Act (2000), which permits a Home Secretary to specify certain names as being synonyms for a previously proscribed organization.[69] The NA Telegram group exposure facilitated a further six arrests on 3 January 2018. Three pled guilty to NA membership, whilst a jury convicted the remaining defendants, two men and a woman, following a trial. One of the defendants, Adam Thomas, whose stepfather had played in the 'white power' band, Skrewdriver, was also convicted of possessing a terrorism manual, contrary to section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000.[70] Police made their twenty-fourth arrest in relation to NA on 23 February: a forty-six year old man charged with NA membership and sending malicious communications.[71] In September police made five further arrests relating to NA membership, bringing the total since the group's proscription to twenty-nine, though not all were ultimately charged with an offence.[72]

Attempting to determine the authorities' understanding of the threat currently posed by the extreme right in Britain without access to operational intelligence is a fools' errand. That said it is possible to piece together an anecdotal picture of the challenge from media statements, statistics, and reports. Following these arrests,

Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Counter-Terrorism, warned in October 2017 that extreme right-wing groups were increasingly moving from protest to action, indicating perhaps the limited deterrent of the ban on some segments of the extreme right-wing movement. He also cited an increase in arrests of right-wing extremists under counter-terrorist legislation, though some of this increase was attributable to NA's proscription.[73] The following spring Rowley publicly announced that since March 2017 the police and security services had interdicted four right-wing inspired 'plots' at least two of which related directly to NA, which was a 'grave concern.'[74]

David Anderson QC, formerly the Independent Reviewer of Counter-Terrorist legislation, further highlighted the nature of the 'small but still deadly threat' posed by extreme right-wing terrorism. During the course of his independent assessment of MI5 and Police internal reviews following jihadist attacks in London and Manchester in March and June 2017, Anderson requested a police briefing on the recent frequency of extreme right attack-planning:

They pointed to instances of attack-planning over the 12 months to October 2017, including the construction of viable explosive devices and the acquisition of firearms, and told me that there were individuals who were assessed to have both the knowledge and the resources to carry out their desired activities. The known level of attack-planning was however very much lower from the XRW than from Islamists: by way of illustration, at the time of my detailed briefing on the XRW threat in summer 2017, there were two pending police operations into XRW attack-planning, both relatively small-scale. It was not possible to quantify the number of thwarted XRW terrorist attacks since October 2013, in part because of uncertainty as to whether a lone actor was actually planning an attack and, if so, whether it would have crossed the threshold from hate crime to terrorism.[75]

Despite such uncertainty, the possibility of lone actors crossing the threshold, from planning to action remains an ongoing concern, as attested to anecdotally by a BBC interview in December 2017 with Nick Daines, an intervention provider and mentor who had worked for the Prevent programme in Wales. 'I worked with a man in the Newport area that was acquiring operational manuals for paramilitary groups and was creating explosives and experimenting with those in a quarry,' Daines told the BBC. 'He was very racially motivated and held a perception there was a coming race war and needed to prepare for that kind of eventuality.' Incidents involving the preparation of explosives or weaponry by extreme right-wing activists are 'not as rare as you would think,' Daines concluded.[76]

System Resistance Network

Despite the outlawing of NA and its successors, and the resulting arrests and prosecutions of activists for attempting to resurrect the group, another cluster of activists remained committed to perpetuating NA's political goals. They styled themselves as the System Resistance Network (SRN), proclaiming that 'White Revolution is the only solution' – a slogan recycled from Tom Metzger's White Aryan Resistance. Flaunting its defiance, the SRN declared 'The National Socialist never capitulates. He will never negotiate away his freedom. He will never compromise his ideals. We are revolutionary National Socialists united by struggle: the struggle against the System.'[77] Hope Not Hate estimated that around 30 former NA, NS131 or Scottish Dawn activists were assisting the individual running the SRN website. 'They're trying to antagonise the State,' noted a spokesperson. [78]

To date, physical SRN activity has been limited, exposing a gap between rhetoric and reality. Its' immediate antecedent was a short-lived 'Vanguard Britannia' group, formed in June 2017 in emulation of Vanguard America, a group that achieved notoriety after one of its members, James A. Fields Jr., murdered a female counter-demonstrator, Heather Heyer, at the 'Unite the Right' white supremacist demonstration in Charlottesville, Virginia. Its provocative name aside, the group did little more than put up stickers and posters in the Scottish town of Arbroath.[79] After two months, the group ditched the name, rebranding as SRN. Its first recorded

action came in August 2017 when activists plastered homophobic posters and stickers around Southampton ahead of a gay pride event in the city.[80] Aesthetically, SRN is reminiscent of NA, its website even recycling older NA graphics. SRN posters affixed in Cardiff bore the slogan 'Death to Traitors' – the name Thomas Mair gave when asked for his particulars in court. Reports of similar activity in Dundee and Cambridge have also appeared whilst the group itself has issued videos instructing viewers to 'Join Your Local Nazis'.[81]

Notably, SRN drew ideological succor from James Mason, a veteran US national socialist who blended Nazism and occultism together with adulation of the cult leader Charles Manson whom he portrayed as an avatar for national socialist revolution. Though limited in its wider appeal, Manson's apocalyptic messianism, lurid race war fantasies, and 'anti-system' rhetoric gained a modicum of traction amongst the more cultic elements of the milieu.[82] Whilst these ideas were novel within a British context, their circulation attested to the transnational influence upon SRN of Atomwaffen (AW), a violent US *groupuscule* whose activists have killed five people. This influence derived from NA networks: Raymond had cultivated a relationship with the original AW leader, Brandon Russell, through the IronMarch forum. Russell had visited him in London in the summer of 2015.[83]

AW had assiduously cultivated Mason, resurrecting his career after several decades in obscurity, interviewing him on their website, and producing a new edition of his seminal book, *Siege*, which 'stridently promotes terrorism'.[84] SRN propaganda reflected Mason's influence. One video, uploaded on 18 February 2018, opened with a quote from *Siege* before declaring: 'We are not interested in creating a mass movement or an online group centred around discussion. Appealing to the masses results in compromising of beliefs and a waste of resources. Our way is the way of action.'[85] Commenting upon this evolving trajectory one anti-fascist source observed 'We no longer believe that they are neo-Nazis, although they are certainly still racists. We believe that they are nihilists, partly because they are so obsessed by terror and the secrecy of terror.'[86]

The permeation of Mason's brand of occult National Socialism into the lexicon of their British counterparts was evident, both visually and rhetorically, in SRN propaganda, which increasingly articulated a political eschatology that conceptualized the group as being engaged in a form of cosmic struggle:

The Racial Holy War is inevitable. Through the Racial Holy War, the Last Battalion consisting of Charles Manson, George Lincoln Rockwell and other Aryan heroes, and the New Reich shall return to Earth and establish the Organic State through the chaos, achieving Endsieg and Total Aryan Victory. Kalki shall bring us out of the Kali Yuga and into the Satya Yuga, and all race traitors and race defilers shall be burned in Holy Fire under Kalki's wrathful gaze.⁸⁷

Following reports that former NA leader Alex Davies was a leading SRN figure in late February 2018 (something he denied), the group purged its website of content.[88] A holding page currently proclaims 'Coming Soon – A New Dawn' together with three words 'Radical – Fanatical – Ascetical.' It also stated 'Universal Order shall always prevail,' a conscious reference to Mason's previous organization. How SRN might develop in the future is unknown though at present it appears moribund. Mason had broadcast his personal support for the group in March 2018,[89] but shortly thereafter SRN abruptly terminated its support for AW. A video entitled 'Splitting the Atom' featured SRN activists burning the AW flag whilst simultaneously announcing the expulsion of their own leader for promoting 'Satanism' and hallucinogenic drug use, amongst other things.[90] AW responded that 'Our support [for SRN] was cut off the instant the leader was dispatched from everything he built.'[91] A new group has since emerged from this milieu, Sonnenkrieg Division, which also drew inspiration from AW. Three of its activists were arrested on terror charges in December 2018.[92]

Problems Enforcing the Ban

Proscribing NA and prosecuting those who remained active in defiance of the ban has proven markedly effective in physically degrading and dismantling the group, despite small-scale efforts by a minority of activists to carry on. In this instance, NA's proscription appears to have been more effective than similar prohibitions aimed at

Irish Republican and Islamist groups like AM. Whilst NA leaders initially sought to mimic AM, their efforts met with much less success, appearing amateurish by comparison. Whilst extreme Islamist groups inspired NA to call for a 'White Jihad', there is also a broader parallel regarding the role such groups have fulfilled as hubs for militant activism following their proscription. Approximately eighteen percent or one fifth of all terror-related arrests in Britain during the course of the last decade had some form of association with AM.[93] Similarly, the NA connection was principally responsible for the 2017-2018 spike in extreme right terror-related arrests.[94]

Where the ban was less successful was in its achieving its broader aim of undermining the NA 'brand,' particularly in relation to its on-line propaganda. This has proven an uphill struggle for the authorities. Although the ban removed the NA website, its YouTube channel and main Twitter feeds,[95] several of its subsidiary blogs, hosted by WordPress, remain online. Scottish Dawn's website remained online until February 2018. The NS131 website remains online (as of November 2018).

British police have the power to issue a notice to remove terrorist material, if hosted in the United Kingdom, under provisions in section 3 of the Terrorism Act (2006). Since servers outside the country host most illegal material, however, the Metropolitan Police Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit instead pursues voluntary agreements with over 300 Communication Service Providers, working alongside them to help them enforce their own terms and conditions. This cooperation led to the removal of over 300,000 pieces of terrorist-related material from the internet between February 2010 and December 2017.[96] This includes NA material.[97]

Reliance upon the diligence of social media conglomerates themselves to evaluate and regulate such content, or indeed even to enforce their own terms and conditions, has proved particularly testing for the authorities. The House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, chaired by Yvette Cooper, MP, voiced its exasperation in its report on online hate crime in April 2017, recommending that the government hold social media companies more directly accountable for removing extremist and terrorist propaganda from their platforms. In particular, the report highlighted:

The weakness and delays in Google's response to our reports of illegal neo-Nazi propaganda on YouTube were dreadful. Despite us consistently reporting the presence of videos promoting National Action, a proscribed far-right group, examples of this material can still be found simply by searching for the name of that organisation. So too can similar videos with different names. As well as probably being illegal, we regard it as completely irresponsible and indefensible.

The Home Affairs Committee also pondered why these companies were capable of quickly removing material that breached copyright but did not employ the same technologies to prevent the sharing and reposting of illegal material. In light of this failure to take 'reasonable steps' to remove illegal material, the Committee recommended that government should now assess 'how the law and enforcement mechanisms should be strengthened in this area.'[98]

Despite such scathing criticism, by the end of the year the situation had not improved. When the Home Affairs Committee reconvened on 19 December, on the eve of the one-year anniversary of NA's proscription, to hear testimony from social media companies, Cooper vented her frustration:

The last time we heard evidence from YouTube, one of the videos we put to YouTube was one from National Action, a banned organisation, banned by March of last year. It was a National Action propaganda video that we put to YouTube, which you and your colleagues accepted should be removed and took down. However, within a month, I found it again on YouTube. Several more months, I found it again and each time raised it with YouTube. It was just simply being posted on different channels. I raised it eventually with the chief executive of YouTube and then still found it again a month later on YouTube. I finally raised it with Kent Walker, the senior vice president of Google, this autumn and finally – your staff will probably be relieved to hear – I cannot currently find it on YouTube. However, that process took about eight months, with me as the Chair of the Select Committee raising it with the most senior people in your organisation, before YouTube managed to use the most basic technology

that you use for your copyright issues all of the time to remove a banned video. Why did it take that much effort and that long just to get one video removed?[99]

Although YouTube had finally removed the offending video, it remained available on Twitter and Facebook, Cooper added. Although social media corporations had hailed the establishment of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) as a means for pooling information regarding terrorism and extremism, Cooper was unimpressed. She highlighted the system's self-evident limitations if NA propaganda, removed by Google and YouTube, remained available on Facebook and Twitter. Either Google had not shared the information, 'or, if it has, the system isn't working to find it,' she stated. Conceding that the GIFCT 'hash database' which was used to share violent extremist and terrorist images and videos amongst members contained 'only' ISIS and al-Qaeda material, Simon Milner, the Director of Public Policy for Facebook, pondered the potential reasons why NA propaganda had not been removed. His answers drew a caustic response from Cooper who deemed it 'incomprehensible' that social companies were not sharing information concerning other forms of violent extremism. She concluded that, given the ease with which they were able to find NA content, 'It is hard for us to trust that you are doing this properly if we find all of these examples where it is clear that you are not.'[100]

Removing violent extremist content does not necessarily solve the problem, however. In theory, those searching for such material must now actively seek it out, rather than passively stumbling across whilst searching for something else. The problem, which Cooper also alighted upon, was that because Google's own algorithms continued to actively recommend racist content to people's timelines, based on their search terms, they 'are actually doing that grooming and radicalisation' for extremist groups, thereby undermining the Government's own counter-terrorist strategies.[101] Google was at pains to refute the charge. To prevent people ending up in a 'bubble of hate' they highlighted their work to identify such content using machine learning techniques which could limit recommendations and also comment facilities on such material.[102]

Days before appearing in front of the Committee, YouTube had proclaimed that these machine-learning algorithms accounted for ninety-eight percent of the 150,000 videos removed from its platforms since June 2017. Furthermore, they stated, such advances enabled them to take down nearly seventy percent of content within eight hours of upload and nearly half of it within two hours, 'and we continue to accelerate that speed.'[103] Further pressure was applied to such companies on 1 March 2018 when the European Commission recommended a set of operational measures noting that because terrorist content was most harmful in the first few hours of its appearance, when it was most rapidly disseminated, it should be removed within 'one hour' of it being flagged to such platforms by law enforcement.[104]

This only served to underscore the reality of the government's struggle to counteract NA online, however. On 7 March 2018, Cooper finally lost patience with Google's unsatisfactory responses, writing publicly to its Vice-President of Public Policy, Nicklas Berild Lundblad, that, despite raising the issue publicly and privately with Google executives 'at least seven times' between March 2017 and December 2017, NA material remained freely and easily accessible on its platforms. 'It shows either hopeless incompetence or a shameful abdication of responsibility,' she wrote.[105] Cooper subsequently stated 'If they are too arrogant to act on illegal material when they are warned repeatedly, it's time to bring in a system of strong fines as the committee recommended last year.'[106] Cooper raised the issue of Google's non-compliance in Parliament the following day and was informed it remained an option to have the social media giant found in contempt of Parliament if it failed to honour its own undertakings to the Home Affairs Select Committee, a warning that piled further pressure upon Google to resolve the issue.[107] The matter remains unresolved. Lundblad's subsequent response to these criticisms regarding the robustness of Google's review system, 'just isn't good enough,' Cooper declared on 6 June 2018.[108] Cooper's very public excoriation of Google aside, other voices have highlighted that the removal of illegal content might also be enforced at other levels of the Internet.[109]

The authorities' failure to satisfactorily conclude the matter of NA's lingering digital footprint underscores the difficulty of combating such propaganda, despite it being one of the principal reasons the government banned the group in the first place. Furthermore, revelations about the limitations of the GIFC database, for instance, highlighted during testimony before the Home Affairs Committee, raises serious questions about

the extent to which social media businesses have taken seriously the threat posed by the lingering existence of militant extreme right propaganda located on their platforms compared to that posted by jihadist groups. Post-Charlottesville, however, the ongoing digital de-platforming of numerous individuals and initiatives indicates something of a sea change in this regard.

Conclusion

A full assessment of the impact of the ban upon NA and its networks has to await the conclusion of several ongoing trials. We can, however, make several observations. The ban was undoubtedly successful in its primary aim of dismantling NA organizationally. It deterred a significant number of NA militants from further political activity, though some have since reappeared in less overtly extreme groups.[110] By the same token, the conviction of numerous activists for continued NA 'membership' from 2017 onwards, highlights that others, particularly in the West Midlands and the North West, remain committed to pursuing the group's original goals. That some NA activists would seek to defy the ban is unsurprising. Simply raising the legal stakes rarely deters activists from engaging in 'high risk' activism.[111] Those activists who chose to continue, albeit on a small scale, tested the legal limits of activism by forming continuity groups, explored new structural forms for organizing, and engaged in militant actions leading to their prosecution for a range of terrorism-related offences. Paradoxically, many of these arrests and convictions were obtained under pre-existing legislation, suggesting the clear possibility that alternatives to proscribing the group existed that would still have seriously disrupted and conceivably ended NA's activities without recourse to the exceptional measure of prohibiting the group itself.

Police have interdicted four terrorist 'plots' since the NA ban, two of which appear directly related to the group. The extent to which the ban might have precipitated further radicalization, which the authorities intended the ban to frustrate, or merely confirmed a pre-existing trajectory, remains unclear. Furthermore, the emergence of SRN indicates that the ideological worldview of some former NA activists has begun to mutate in the aftermath of the ban, moving in a more 'cultic' direction as their 'anti-system' narratives hardened. These activists frame the post-ban period as 'our time of struggle' against an 'occupation government' seeking to silence 'white dissidents' - or worse.[112] It is clear, however, that, broadly speaking, the ban, its subsequent enforcement, and the application of pre-existing legislation, have all combined to seriously diminish the milieu's capacity to mobilize. This observation aligns with the results of existing research *vis-à-vis* the banning of extreme right parties in Germany, a useful point of comparison for policy makers seeking to assess potential outcomes resulting from proscription.

Where the ban has been less successful, has been in its effort to undermine NA's 'brand' by preventing the dissemination of its 'poisonous propaganda' online. Whilst the ban succeeded in closing down the group's own digital platforms, to the evident frustration of the Home Affairs Select Committee, the long-term success of this counter-measure appears reliant more upon the capacity and willingness of social media companies to implement their own terms and conditions rather than the power of politicians to legislate the problem away.

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Notes

- [1] Tim Legrand and Lee Jarvis, 'Enemies of the state: Proscription powers and their use in the United Kingdom,' *British Politics*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 450 - 471 highlights this as a key challenge.
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Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Hungary at the Beginning of the 21st Century

by Miroslav Mareš

Abstract

Right-wing extremist violence in Hungary seriously impacted the development of the country in the first two decades of this century. Some manifestations can be seen as an important challenge to current research on terrorism – mostly the cases of the so-called Death Squad and the Hungarian Arrows National Liberation Army. This article deals with the modi operandi of these groups within the context of political development in Hungary and in East Central Europe in recent times. The first of these groups murdered and injured Romani people with Molotov cocktails and shotguns; the targets of the second group were mostly political opponents. This group used arson attacks and explosives, but did not kill people.

Keywords: Right-wing terrorism, Hungary, racist violence, Roma minority

Introduction

Right-wing extremist political violence is a significant challenge to democratic development in East-Central Europe. The most serious forms of this violence can be found in Hungary in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The so-called Death Squad (Halálbrigád) and the Hungarian Arrows National Liberation Army (Magyarok Nyilai Nemzeti Felszabadító Hadsereg – MNMFH) are relatively unusual phenomena in the European context.[1] The violent right-wing extremist scene arose at the same time as illiberal tendencies were strengthening in East Central European politics, after a relatively successful post-Communist transformation and after Hungary's access to Euro-Atlantic structures.

The goal of this article is to explain the specific character of both the above-mentioned Hungarian terrorist groups, particularly their modi operandi. Historical traditions of violent right-wing extremism in modern Hungarian history are outlined, because legacies play an important role in the ideological background of recent militant groups. The activities of those groups with a terrorist character are analysed within the context of general political development in Hungary. Militant campaigns in Hungary are categorized within a research framework of terrorism and violent extremism, which is outlined in this short introductory section and revisited in the final analysis. It is important to mention, according to Hungarian law, the scientific conceptualization of terrorism can differ from the legal assessment of individual cases. Unclear and undiscovered attributes of these groups as well as ongoing and incomplete trials related to violent extremist activities are obstacles to obtaining information for an exact analysis. However, there are sufficient sources available to enable relevant research in this field.

Research Framework for Right-Wing Extremist Violence and Terrorism

Right-wing extremist terrorism is a category based on the ideological background of terrorist organizations or individuals. As Michael Logvinov states, right-wing terrorists use the construct of the nationally homogeneous society, based on subjectively perceived identity. This society – from their point of view – is threatened and weakened by external influences and they feel called to serve as its protectors.[2] Right-wing terrorism can be linked to several ideologies, mostly by various forms of nationalist right-wing authoritarianism (such as the “lone wolf” Franz Fuchs in Austria with his one-man “Bajuvarian Befreiungsarmee”[Bavarian Liberation Army] in the 1990s), by Fascist and Neo-fascist or Nazi or neo-Nazi ideologies (such as the National Social Underground – NSU – in Germany) or by the “new alt-Right” (such as Anders Breivik in 2011).[3] In some cases, we can find “primitive” racist or chauvinist attitudes without deeper ideological roots, such as seems to

be the case for some Russian violent gangs with terrorist tendencies in the 2000s.[4]

In the classical typology of terrorism by Schmid and Jongman, right-wing terrorism is subsumed under the category of social-revolutionary terrorism.[5] However, vigilante terrorism in the same typology is defined as a specific category (in addition to social-revolutionary terrorism). Many authors frequently connect vigilante terrorism with right-wing extremist ideological backgrounds.[6] Ehud Sprinzak even defined vigilante terrorism as one of six subcategories of right-wing terrorism, in addition to revolutionary terrorism, reactive terrorism, racist terrorism, millenarian terrorism and youth counterculture terrorism.[7]. In fact, in concrete cases we can find a mixture of these analytical categories. A vigilantist strategy can be used for social-revolutionary goals if vigilante terrorists demonstrate through brutal acts their capability to restore a hard “law and order” situation, without subjectively perceived “anomalies” (minorities, homeless people, criminals etc.). They can win public support from people with authoritarian and racist attitudes. However, right-wing extremist terrorism can also use a conventional campaign focused on political, ethnic or racial targets, with the goal of threatening a broader audience and/or governmental representatives.[8] As Peter Waldmann wrote, right-wing terrorists do not always count on a terrorist calculus focused on an excessive reaction of the state. They are satisfied with the spread of fear; in many cases, they do not even publish explicit claims of responsibility since their brutal acts speak, as it were, for themselves.[9] However, right-wing terrorism can also be used with the strategic intention of provoking a counter-terrorist or massive governmental reaction, with the goal of initiating unrest or even civil war. A specific case is the so-called “strategy of tension” connected with “false flag operations”, which was typical for Italian neo-Fascist terrorism during the 1960s and 1970s.[10]

Right-wing terrorism belongs to a broad spectrum of right-wing extremist violent activities. The borderline between non-terrorist and terrorist violence is in many cases fuzzy. Fear can be spread by street violence committed by subcultural racist gangs (as we know from the Skinhead era of the 1990s) and this can turn into terrorist violence, or at least into propaganda about such violence (as in the case of the group Combat 18). Right-wing terrorists can also initiate broader and more serious violence with terrorist acts, such as a revolution or a civil war. They are in many cases influenced by historic legacies, not only (or even not at all) by terrorist models, but also by historical warriors, commanders, paramilitaries, guerrilla fighters etc. Due to this fact, it is important to take into account the legacy of right-wing extremist militancy in relation to the right-wing extremist subjects being researched.

It is difficult to identify general causes and conditions of right-wing terrorism, among other reasons due to a lack of major comprehensive studies. Right-wing terrorism is usually researched thematically (lone wolves etc.) or regionally (Western Europe etc.) in focused analytical or comparative studies or in single case studies. Jacob Ravndal identified two “causal recipes” of right-wing terrorism in Western Europe. Firstly, the North European recipe “involves the combination of high immigration, low electoral support for anti-immigration (radical right) parties, and extensive public repression of radical right actors and opinions”.[11] Secondly, the South European recipe “involves the combination of socioeconomic hardship, authoritarian legacies, and extensive left-wing terrorism and militancy”.[12] “[A] highly polarised conflict” between far-right activists and their enemies represents a necessary condition for extensive right-wing terrorism to occur.[13] In East Central Europe – notably in Hungary – it is important to add to this the presence of national minorities (perceived as “problematic” by right-wing extremists) and the irredentist interests of right-wing extremism.

Ravndal’s necessary condition – the existence of a highly polarized conflict – can be connected with this issue, and not only with the antagonism of an extreme left. Donatella Della Porta uses the term “competitive escalation” in her research on clandestine political violence in the sense of socialization of militants to violence “during harsh social conflicts that involved competitive relations not only with outsiders but also within the social movement family.”[14] An adaptation of the above-mentioned criteria to the conditions and societal environment in Hungary will be explained towards the end of this article.

Historic Legacies of Right-Wing Extremist Violence in Hungary

Hungarian right-wing extremist violence has its modern roots in the paramilitary activities of nationalist groups after the First World War. These patriotic forces fought against the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic of Bela Kun (March to August 1919) as well as against other political opponents. In addition, they were also active in borderland conflicts[15] (the so called Rongyos Gárda – Ragged Guards – was a well known force in this era). Repressive “White Terror” (in opposition to Communist “Red Terror”) characterized their activity. As successor to the defeated Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Hungary lost a large part of its former territory due to the Treaty of Trianon of 1920. Millions of Hungarians have lived since that time outside the borders of their former motherland.[16] The so-called “Trianon victim complex” determines Hungarian politics to the present day and is likely to continue to play an important role in the future (among other ways, in relation to the 100th anniversary in 2020).

In the interwar period, the authoritarian regime of regent Miklós Horthy ruled in Hungary.[17] At the end of the 1930s, voluntary irredentist paramilitary groups, supported by governmental bodies, attacked Czechoslovak borderlands. The renewed Rongyos Gárda and the newly formed Szabadcsapatok (Free troops) used guerrilla and terrorist tactics.[18] Despite the right-wing authoritarian character of the Horthy regime, more extreme groupings arose in the 1930s. Ferenc Szálasi was a militant politician who founded the Arrow Cross Party – Hungarist Movement (Nyilaskeresztes Párt – Hungarista Mozgalo) in 1939.

Hungary fought on the side of the Axis powers during the Second World War. In 1944, the Arrow crosses (a popular name of the party) took over power in Hungary with German support, and from October 1944 until the end of World War Two April Szálasi led a terror regime (his government was, among many other things, responsible for multiple anti-Semitic atrocities). Two Hungarian SS Divisions – 25th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS “Hunyadi” (1st Hungarian) and the 26th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (2nd Hungarian) – were established.[19] The common fight of the German and Hungarian Nazis against the Allies at the end of the war created an important propaganda tool for Hungarian neo-Nazis – alluded to up to the present day. An annual “Day of Honour” is organized each February to remember the Battle of Budapest in 1945. It also serves as an occasion for bringing together members of the European neo-Nazi scene.[20]

The Communist regime in Hungary during the Cold War eliminated the activities of right-wing extremists on Hungarian territory. Small Fascist cells surfaced during the democratic anti-Communist and anti-Soviet uprising in Hungary in 1956, but had no significant impact on the course of events. The successors of the Arrow Cross party worked in exile in Western countries.[21] After the fall of the Iron Curtain, they supported the development of right-wing extremism in Hungary.

A new militant right-wing extremist Hungarian scene grew in the late Communist period in the 1980s. Racist Skinhead subculture came from the West into Hungarian society in the era of specific national Communism. In the 1990s, many local groupings with links to the racist Skinhead and Hooligan scene were formed in various parts of Hungary. Branches of transnational networks were also established – mostly the Hungarian Hammerskins and Blood & Honour Hungary. Racist Skinheads attacked political opponents and ethnically and racially defined enemies (mostly Romani people). In the 1990s, this subcultural milieu created a basis for further development of violent structures, including the formation of Death Squad (see below). In addition to these youngsters, the older generation of right-wing extremists was also actively engaged in militant groups – especially Istvan Györkös (born 1940). In 1992, he founded the Hungarian National Front (MNA).[22]

The historic legacy of Hungarian right-wing extremism can also be characterized by a high level of violence and by an ethos of paramilitary formations using terrorism. From the ideological point of view, militant right-wing extremism in Hungary can be divided into 1) “Hungarists” (linked to the legacy of the Arrow Cross party), 2) internationalist National Socialists (linked to the global neo-Nazi scene) and 3) “national radicals” (the strongest part, linked to intolerant nationalism with historic roots, but without strong acceptance of the Szálasi era). Hungarian right-wing extremist organizations carry out their activities not only on current Hungarian territory, but also in traditional Hungarian diasporas in neighboring countries and in new Hungarian emigrant diasporas in the world. Irredentism, anti-Romani attitudes, anti-liberalism and (in many cases) anti-Semitism

are typical elements of the ideological background of Hungarian right-wing extremism.

Contemporary Hungarian Militant Right-Wing Extremism

The rise of more recent Hungarian right-wing extremism is closely connected with protests against the Socialist government in September 2006. A new generation of right-wing extremist organizations was engaged in these protests, mostly the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom – HVIM), an irredentist association founded in 2001 by young journalist László Toroczkai (born 1978). The new Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom), founded in 2003, also took an active part. Several demonstrations in Budapest turned violent. It was mostly Hooligans and members of racist groupings that clashed with the police. Toroczkai called for violence to stop after several days of riots; however, right-wing extremists were responsible for the radicalization of the protests.[23]

One year later, the leader of the Jobbik Gábor Vona initiated the creation of the Hungarian Guard (Magyar Garda). This uniformed paramilitary unit patrolled in areas with a strong Romani population. Despite the fact that it avoided the use of direct physical violence, it manifested a potential threat. The original Hungarian Guard (with approximately one thousand members) was banned in 2009;[24] however, several successor paramilitary organizations were founded. The MG inspired a wave of vigilantism in the East Central European area.[25] On the other hand, in 2009 members of the Hungarian Guard and the HVIM protested several times in front of the Slovak embassy in Budapest against the new Slovak minority language act (it was considered as instrument against the Hungarian minority in Slovakia). After these protests, Molotov cocktails hit the Slovak embassy, although the perpetrator is unknown.[26]

It is important to mention that approximately at the same time as the Hungarian Guard arose, both militant groups with a terrorist character – the Death Squad and the MNMFH – carried out violent campaigns. Despite the fact that there is no evidence of their interconnection with the Hungarian Guard, they also spread fear and intimidated communities – mostly Romani people. Vigilante and violent anti-Romani activities were explained as a reaction to so-called “Gypsy crime” by Hungarian right-wing extremists.[27] Ideas of an ethnic conflict were propagated - which strengthened the impact of terror.

After the banning of the MG and the arrest of the Death Squad and the MNMFH, the level of right-wing extremist violence in Hungary slightly declined. However, some serious incidents still occurred in the second decade of the twenty-first century, such as the threatening of the Romani population in the village of Gyöngyöspata by members of the paramilitary group Szebb Jövőért (For a Better Future).[28] The migration crisis led to the emergence of a new type of paramilitary vigilante units in East-Central Europe.[29] Some of these units were under strong Russian influence. These groups started training and operations (patrolling, hunting, etc.) against migrants.

István Györkös, the already mentioned leader of the MNA, changed his organization into a well-trained and well-equipped paramilitary group. According to governmental sources, officers of the Russian military intelligence service GRU were in charge of some of the training. The National Bureau of Investigation searched for illegal weapons in Györkös's house in Böni on 26 October 2016. Chief detective major Péter Pálvolgyi died after shooting between Györkös and the police broke out. Shortly after the incident, the perpetrator was captured.[30] Györkös's case was labelled as terrorism by some media;[31] however, he was charged with murder and indicted for illegal use of firearms.[32] The trial began on 25 April 2018 and had not finished at the time of the submission of this article.

Militants from Hungarian communities abroad [33] were also active. The prosecution of two Hungarian irredentists – István Beke and Zoltán Szócs – from the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement in Romania, was a topical case in the years 2015–2017. They were investigated by the Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) due to the suspicion of preparing a terrorist attack. They allegedly “instigated the members of the HVIM cell in Târgu Secuiesc to make an improvised explosive device that would be

detonated during the demonstrations on Romania's national day celebrated in Târgu Secuiesc in 2015.”[34] However, they were sentenced in April 2017 to “only” ten and eleven months in prison, for an attempted action against the constitutional order and unlawfully using pyrotechnics. The cases of the Death Squad and the Hungarian Arrows National Liberation Army remain the most important cases of terrorist right-wing violence in recent times.[35]

Death Squad

The so-called “Death Squad” (Halálbrigád) in Hungary was a group of four perpetrators responsible for ten attacks in 2008–2009, resulting in the killing of six Romani people with many more suffering injuries (the so called “Roma-Murders” – Roma-gyilkosságok). With the exception of the first attack (a shooting at a refugee camp) all the attacks were focused on the Roma community. The above-mentioned names were used by the media; the original name of the group is not known (if it has one). The group did not publish communiqués, and the perpetrators did not testify during police investigation or during the trial. This means that information about their motivation and modus operandi is based on investigations and on external sources.

The members of the group were brothers Árpád Kiss (43 years old at the time of arrest) and István Kiss (34), Zsolt Pető (34) and István Csontos (29).[36] If we look at the individual biographies of members of this group, we can find significant differences in age between the oldest Árpád Kiss and the youngest István Csontos. However, all members of this group had experience of the subcultural milieu – either racist Skinheads (allegedly including “elite” Hammerskins in the case of István Kiss) or football Hooligans. When István Kiss was 19, he had set on fire the Torah in the synagogue in Debrecen; however, he was found not guilty by the court.[37] István Csontos was a former soldier in the Hungarian army (he also served two years in Kosovo) and allegedly was an informant for the country's military intelligence (with the task of informing about unrest and dissatisfaction in the army). His role and possible links to the secret service were not clarified.[38] At the time of their detention, all the perpetrators were employed in “ordinary jobs” (sound engineers at the local discotheque, cook and pastry cook).[39]

The criminal activities of the group started on 7 March 2008, when the brothers Kiss and Pető robbed the house of a professional hunter in Besenyszög and stole seven hunting weapons. On 2 June 2008, the perpetrators tested these weapons and fired two shots at a refugee camp in Debrecen (one person was slightly injured). On 20 June 2008, an anti-Romani campaign began in Galgagyörk, followed by attacks in Pircse on 7 August, in Nyíradony-Tamásipusztá on 4 September and in Tarnabod on 28 September. These attacks were aimed at houses inhabited by Romani people (only in Tarnabod the perpetrators mistakenly targeted another house), the perpetrators used firearms and Molotov cocktails; however, nobody was killed (the victims were, however, injured and intimidated). The first two victims were killed during an attack in Nagycséc on 2 November 2008. The attack in Alsószolca on 18 December 2008 followed. The next two victims (a father and son) were killed during an attack in Tatárszentgyörgy on 23 February 2009, one person (a Roma worker) died after an attack in Tiszalök on 22 April 2009 and the last victim (the mother of a 13-year-old daughter, who was seriously injured), died during an attack in Kisléta on 2 August 2009. The perpetrators were apprehended on 21 August 2009 in Debrecen (the FBI assisted the Hungarian police in the last phase of the investigation).[40] In 2013, the brothers Kiss and Pető were sentenced to life imprisonment, and István Csontos to 13 years in prison. In 2016, Hungary's Supreme Court affirmed the verdict.[41]

The primary targets of the group and all the murdered victims were Romani people. This group selected targets in relation to information about so-called “Gypsy crime” in various areas of Hungary, specifically in its eastern part, where the concentration of the Romani population is strongest. Individual victims were selected ad hoc. The “headquarters” of this group was in the town of Debrecen in this area. The murderers combined the use of Molotov-cocktails and rifles, sometimes “only” shooting at Romani people or houses with firearms, without subsequent arson attacks. In total, 6 victims were killed and 55 injured; 63 shots were fired and 11 Molotov cocktails were used. Primarily, the perpetrators (from their point of view) “punished” the Roma community for alleged “crime and parasitism”; however, the final goal of the perpetrators was to incite retaliation against

ethnic Hungarians from the Romani people and thus to provoke an ethnic war “in which the Roma would be exterminated.”[42]

As I wrote in a previous article:

“They used maps and satellite imagery, choosing some targets at random and others according to media reports, including those where there was increased tension between the Roma and the majority. They would drive to their destination, leaving their car parked at some distance and continuing on foot; then they would attack and withdraw. The attacks were mostly carried out at night, and the perpetrators used night-vision equipment. They started with attacks on property – though even in these there was the possibility of injuring or killing people – later shifting to purposeful murderous assaults on people. The group was very interested in how its activities were presented in the media, and this also contributed to the escalation of the group’s violence.”[43]

Anti-racist activist András B. Vágvölgyi described what was probably the most brutal act of the group in these words: “On February 22, 2009 they dropped Molotov cocktails on the roof of a Roma house, the last one in the village of Tatárszentgyörgy, firing off shotguns at the escaping family, killing a father, Robert Csorba (27 years old) and his young son Robert Csorba Jr (5 years old), and injuring his sister, Bianka (7 years old).”[44]

The group was not prosecuted as a terrorist association, and even the racist motivation was “unclear”, at least according to the investigators. The TE-SAT report from Europol stated: “Since November 2008, people of this minority group were killed in nine attacks. Although four right-wing extremists were arrested for these killings in Hungary, it is not proven at this stage of the investigation whether there was a racist intention behind the serial murders.”[45] The racist motivation and terrorist character of the activity of this group were, however, clear according to research.

The so-called “Death Squad” is an example of a well-organized group with highly motivated perpetrators. Experience from the Nazi-Skinhead milieu and strong racist nationalism determined its activity. The members were able to act while “underground”, without publishing any statements. The group used semi-random target selection – Romani people (including children), without focusing on specific individuals. The victims were attacked because of their ethnic origin. The activity of the group had also a transnational impact on the right-wing extremist scene. On the night of 19 April 2009, a group of four neo-Nazis attacked a house inhabited by a Romani family in Vítkov in the Czech Republic with Molotov cocktails. A small Roma girl (aged two at the time) suffered burns on 80 percent of her body. The perpetrators assessed the brutal attacks in Hungary at the same time as positive, as police investigation showed.[46]

On the other hand, the “Roma killers” mobilized the domestic and international anti-racist scene. The general context of racist homicides brought pressure on the Hungarian government and society with the aim of improving the position of the Romani people. Two important films were dedicated to this case – the 2013 documentary “*Judgement in Hungary*” directed by Eszter Hajdú [47] and the 2012 drama “*Just a Wind*” (Csak a szél) directed by Benedek Fliegauf.[48]

Hungarian Arrows National Liberation Army

The Hungarian Arrows National Liberation Army (Magyarok Nyilai Nemzeti Felszabadító Hadsereg – MNMFH) was another terrorist group active in Hungary between 2007 and 2009. While the trial of the Death Squad finished in 2016, the trial of the alleged members of the MNMFH is still ongoing. The Budapest Court of Appeal threw out the terrorism conviction against György Budaházy and his seventeen co-defendants and ordered a new trial on 19 April 2018 because of a problem with the legality of the evidence [49] (in 2016, Budaházy had been sentenced to 13 years in prison for terrorism by the court of first instance) [50]. This fact makes the description of the group problematic, mostly because it is not clear how strong the links to nationalist political circles in Hungary were. On the other hand, this group used communiqué to the media in several instances and its modus operandi can also be explained without knowledge of the individual perpetrators and

possible external drivers of the activity of the group.

According to media sources, the group was founded in spring 2007 by György Budaházy, a well-known figure in the right-wing extremist scene, and it was reportedly linked to the publicly active “Hunnia Movement”.[51] However, this fact has not yet been confirmed by court investigation. According to Hungarian police sources, the MNNFH was responsible for the following attacks:

- On 24 October 2007, Socialist politician László Ecsődi was attacked with a Molotov cocktail;
- On 11 December 2007, four masked men beat up and seriously injured Csintalan Sándort, a journalist with Hír TV and former Socialist deputy (four days later the group took responsibility in a communiqué which was sent to Hír TV);
- On 16 December 2007, the houses of Liberal politician and entrepreneur János Kóka and Socialist politician István Hiller were attacked with Molotov cocktails;
- On 8 February 2008, the houses of five Socialist politicians were attacked with Molotov cocktails;
- On 1 April 2008, a house in Budapest was attacked;
- On 3 September 2008, an arson attack was committed at the weekend house of György Szilvássy, at that time minister of civilian intelligence services;
- In January 2009, a threatening message was sent to liberal politician John Emese;
- On 6 March 2009, a bomb exploded in a bus. The MNNFH was, according to the police, responsible for this explosion.[52]

Members of the group were also “planning to blow up explosives hidden in footballs placed in front of the homes of four Members of Parliament (representatives of the government party).”[53]

According to the Athena institute, the group claimed responsibility for firebombing several clubs frequented by the Hungarian LGBT community and it “intended to intimidate members of the community and to prevent the yearly Gay Pride rally.”[54] The group also sent envelopes containing a white substance (a mixture of sugar and flour) to 33 socialist, liberal and conservative politicians (including Prime Minister Viktor Orbán). The police destroyed the core of the group in April 2009.[55]

The modus operandi of the MNNFH consisted of arson attacks against houses, a direct physical attack on a journalist, the production and use of explosives and sending threatening letters. The arson and explosive attacks caused damage to property only; the victim of the beating was injured. The goal of the group was probably not to kill people, but to threaten political opponents and the LGBT community. The group criticized the corruption and decadence of the established parties, mostly the Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt – MSzP), which was for a long time the strongest party in the Hungarian political system. The attacks on selected politicians during the era of huge political dissatisfaction were intended to win public support for right-wing extremist ideas, represented by the MNNFH in its statements.

Comparison of Right-Wing Terrorism in Hungary with the European Context

Hungarian groups play an important role in the European comparative context of right-wing extremist terrorism in the twenty-first century. On the one hand, they have many specific characteristic elements; however, they also show some similarities with other groups or individuals operating at this time. As follows from the above, the “Death Squad” and the MNNFH are different, at least regarding their modi operandi. This fact is important to take into account if we want to compare the situation in Hungary with the situation in other countries.

East-Central Europe is traditionally considered a region with a higher level of right-wing extremist violence than Western Europe.[56] The situation in Hungary in the second half of the first decade of the twenty-first

century shows an extraordinary growth of right-wing violent activities in comparison with in the first half. A similar tendency can be found in Russia at the same time - but with a broader scope of violence.[57] The Czech Republic was moving on a similar trajectory at the same time; however, it did not lead to such brutal results as in the case of the Death Squad or to such a sophisticated selection of goals as with the MNNFH. Who committed the wave of arson attacks in Silesia against Romani houses in 2007–2009 has never been solved, with the exception of the Vítkov attack from 2009. It may be that, on the periphery of the Czech Republic, the police action against the four attackers from Vítkov stopped a possible development towards neo-Nazi terrorism. At the same time, huge anti-Romani riots and vigilante patrols of right-wing paramilitary groups were organized in the Czech Republic.

Regarding the membership of terrorist groups, members of the “Death Squad” started their right-wing extremist careers in the racist skinhead subculture. The same was typical of the German NSU (Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund) [58] and the Belgian group Blood, Soil, Honour and Loyalty (Bloed, Bodem, Eer en Trouw – BBET). [59] A move to an organized terrorist group “improved” previous subcultural street violence. Members of the MNNFH came predominantly from more intellectual right-wing extremist circles, which shows similarities with the “old style” revolutionary right-wing terrorism in Italy or Germany in the 1960s–1980s.

The low number of core members of the Death Squad (four) is also comparable with the NSU (three), while membership of Russian groups or the BBET was higher (around ten). In Hungary, no case of a right-wing terrorist lone wolf is known (István Györkös was a member of the MNA, and his case is questionably labelled as terrorism). That is different from the Polish case of Brunon Kwiecień, from Anders Breivik in Norway, Pavlo Lapsyhn in the United Kingdom and from many other cases.[60] With a few exceptions (Beate Zschäpe from the NSU and some women affiliates of the BBET or to Russian gangs) right-wing terrorism in the twenty-first century is predominantly carried out by men, and there is no knowledge of important female roles in Hungarian right-wing extremism at this time.

The *modus operandi* of the Death Squad was characterized by brutal murders of members of a national minority. The message of the terrorists was included in the act itself; we can speak about a specific form of “propaganda by deed”. The case of the Death Squad shows some similarities with the German NSU case (ethnic selection of targets, no statements, alleged links to secret services). However, the focus on Roma is typical of central and eastern Europe. The strategy to provoke ethnic war is probably similar to the BBET (however, the Death Squad did not plan “false flag operations”). Ideologically, overlaps in the neo-Nazi legacies of the Death Squad, the BBET, the NSU and the Russian Nazi gangs can be seen.

The campaign of the MNNFH is relatively unusual. It was focused on selectively chosen Liberal and Leftist politicians and journalists, and the campaign was carried out continuously (however, without causing the death of victims). The selection of targets was based predominantly on political beliefs, and not linked to ethnic and racial issues. The Polish right-wing lone wolf Brunon Kwiecień had some similar anti-liberal motives. However, in his case anti-Semitism and inspiration from Anders Breivik in Oslo allegedly played a significant role[61] – in contrast to the “endogenous” Hungarian character of the MNNFH.

The specific element of the activity of the Death Squad was the focus on serial killings of Romani people and using firearms and Molotov cocktails with a threatening message for the Romani community. In the case of the MNNFH, the specific element was a selective approach to targets from the milieu of political opponents (with the exception of alleged bus attacks).

Analysis of Right-Wing Terrorism in Hungary in the 21st Century

The most serious phase of right-wing terrorism in Hungary occurred in the second half of the 2000s, despite the fact that its legal consequences are being resolved in the second half of the 2010s. To understand the activities of the Death Squad and the MNNFH, it is important to keep in mind the whole development in Hungary in this era. Brutal killers from the Death Squad and “selective” attackers from the MNNFH are only two of many

violent fringes of the right-wing protest wave in Hungary (which included vigilantism, street violence, etc.).

Despite the differences between these two groups, the use of terrorist or similar methods by parts of the Hungarian right-wing extremist scene can be assessed as an attempt to accelerate the radicalization of the whole society and as an effort to support a right-wing political change in the country. However, while the MNNFH allegedly had some links to the mainstream of the growing right-wing extremist political party scene (the court trial is still ongoing), the activities and membership of the Death Squad were limited to a small local neo-Nazi scene.

If we look at the character of the violence of these groups, we can find significant differences. The strategy of the MNNFH was purely social-revolutionary. It was aimed against established politicians with the goal of intimidating them while also winning public support. The strategy of the Death Squad mixed the vigilante approach ("punishment" of the community for alleged "Gypsy crime") with revolutionary goals (to initiate ethnic civil war and as part of the war to eliminate the Roma community). The MNNHF used communiqués for communication with the public; for the Death Squad, "propaganda by deed" was sufficient. The MNNHF did not kill its victims (although it used physical violence, arson attacks, one bomb with a timer and also issued several written threats). The brutal murders committed by the Death Squad gained world-wide attention.

If we look at the factors that have a possible impact on right-wing terrorism from the research framework outlined, we can identify only some of them in Hungary in the second half of the 2000s. The migration level was low at that time; however, a strong role was played by the so-called "Roma issue" and by the so-called "Trianon complex"). After the migration crisis which hit Hungary in 2015 and later, no new terrorist wave in Hungary. On the other hand, vigilantism and paramilitarism increased again.[62]

The level of political repression against right-wing extremism was relatively limited in Hungary in the mid 2000s. However, police measures during anti-government riots in 2006 were perceived by right-wing extremist militants as unacceptable state violence. This caused anger in the right-wing extremist milieu. At that time, disillusion with socio-economic development was widespread in Hungarian society - the result of the negative impact of socio-economic transformations on the life standards of large parts of the population (mostly in peripheral regions). The resistance against the Socialist government exploded after the speech of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány on 2 September 2006 at the party congress of the Hungarian Socialist Party, in which he admitted that he had previously lied to the public.[63]

In the mid 2000s, a decline in right-wing extremist party political representation occurred. After the success of the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja – MIÉP) in 1990, the Hungarian extreme right lost its parliamentary representation. The new party Jobbik arose in the second half of the 2000s and became a stable element in Hungarian parliamentary politics in 2010. Rejection of Socialist politics led to a return to national and authoritarian legacies by a large proportion of Hungarian voters.[64]

Left-wing extremist violence was and is very weak in Hungary in the twenty-first century.[65] This means that it has a different role than in Western Europe, because militant right-wing extremists are not confronted with violent political opponents. Ravndal's "highly polarized conflict" and Porta's "competitive escalation" should be related in the Hungarian context to competition with non-violent Socialists and Liberals and in the context of the subjectively perceived reaction of right-wing extremists to so-called "Gypsy crime". These factors played a crucial role in the rise of the two most important Hungarian right-wing terrorist groups. However, the socio-psychological factors in the radicalization of small collectives should be taken into account if we want to understand why these two groups only turned to a significant degree to terrorist violence. (Unfortunately, the lack of official information about both these cases does not allow a more in-depth analysis)

From a contemporary perspective, we can see the decline of politically motivated direct physical violence in Hungarian society. The political situation in Hungary has changed since the mid 2000s. Socialist and Liberal enemies of the extreme right are marginalized in the current Hungarian political spectrum. The electoral success of the conservative party Fidesz as well as the growth of the extreme right Jobbik party led to illiberal[66] tendencies in Hungarian politics and society [67] Although we can see a limited decline in the

militant right-wing extremist scene, this scene still remains relatively strong. In the mid 2010s, the Jobbik party, which used violent protests from 2006 and the original Hungarian Guard for its purposes, began a process of stylized “de-extremization” (or de-demonization, as Michael Minkenberg calls it). However, some individual members of the party still share racist anti-Romani violent statements.[68] The migrant crisis and its possible development pose a new important topic for the Hungarian extreme right, including vigilantism. Irredentist tendencies may be strengthened in relation to the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon. Ongoing trials of alleged perpetrators of right-wing extremist violence radicalized some extreme-right supporters. A return to serious forms of right-wing extremist violence cannot be excluded in Hungary for the future. However, recent developments show the declining tendency of militancy (in contrast to the growth of right-wing politics, which has its roots in resistance to the failure of Socialist government in the mid- 2000s).

Conclusion

Two main right-wing terrorist groups were active in Hungary at the beginning of the twenty-first century and several violent incidents committed by other perpetrators occurred in Hungary or were caused by Hungarian right-wing militant activists abroad. The neo-Nazi serial killers of Romani people of the Death Squad were able to spread a threatening message to a vulnerable ethnic community, while the MNNHF with its legacy of the “Arrow Crosses” intimidated predominantly Liberal and Leftist politicians at a time following a great political crisis. These violent fringes of the right-wing in Hungary operated at the same time as vigilante and paramilitary formations arose in the country and national-conservative and right-wing extremist tendencies in Hungarian politics gained strength. While right-wing terrorism has recently declined in Hungary, the other above-mentioned issues continue to play an important role. The militant right-wing extremist milieu in Hungary still exists.

Acknowledgment

This article was supported by the Grant Agency of the Masaryk University within the context of the research grants Current Issues in Political Science IV (code MUNI/A/0850/2017).

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Notes

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Italy, No Country for Acting Alone? Lone Actor Radicalisation in the Neo-Fascist Milieu

by Pietro Castelli Gattinara, Francis O'Connor and Lasse Lindekilde

Abstract

Recent research on lone-actor terrorism has emphasized that many far-right attackers are guided by the doctrine of Leaderless Resistance, which holds that individual militants have a personal onus to autonomously carry out attacks. In this framework, Italy stands out because, despite its bloody history of right-wing political violence and terrorism, it has heretofore avoided, with one notable exception, any fatal lone actor attacks. This article presents a deviant case design: focusing on the exceptional case of Gianluca Casseri, the CasaPound sympathizer who went on a shooting spree in Florence in 2011, it questions theoretical assumptions concerning the non-occurrence of lone-actor terrorism by advancing a general proposition for why terrorists opt to act individually in settings where collective action is the norm. Based on first-hand information from CasaPound militants, and extensive primary data on the radicalization of Casseri, we argue that the choice between autonomous and collective violence is not only a matter of contextual constraints, personality and strategic choice. Rather, it also crucially depends on the degree of embeddedness of an individual in his or her milieu, and on the nature of the radical movement itself. The findings thus contribute to identifying the conditions that make the occurrence of lone-actor terrorism most likely, as well as the circumstances under which existing countervailing forces might fail to impede individual radicalization.

Keywords: Lone actor, far right, Italy, CasaPound, leaderless resistance, *modus operandi*

Introduction

In recent years, violent attacks by lone-actor terrorists, including by militant right-wing extremists, have become a major concern for European governments. Recent studies illustrate that right-wing actors are overrepresented in lone-actor violence.[1,2,3] Many of these extremists are motivated by the strategy of Leaderless Resistance which gained prominence in far-right American circles in the 1980s and 1990s.[4,5] However, it has also been adopted by many far-right European militants. Yet less attention has been paid to explaining how, when and why this violence becomes the *modus operandi* of lone-actor plots rather than more conventional types of collective violence.[6]

It has been argued that lone-actor violence inspired by Leaderless Resistance is a weapon of last resort when opportunities for collective mobilisation are absent.[7,8] But evidence from the far-right American movement shows that a combination of collective mobilisation and lone-actor terrorist attacks can be complementary rather than an either/or choice.[9] In this respect, existing evidence shows that contexts characterised by favourable opportunities for far-right mobilization, such as Germany and the UK, display both lone-actor attacks and organised group violence.[10] Other settings, such as Austria, experienced multiple lone-actor attacks but virtually no collective-level violence. Yet other countries - such as Italy - are characterized by high levels of far-right mobilization but experience low incidence of lone-actor violence. If country-specific cultural and political opportunities, such as the legacy of past movements, explain why lone-actor tactics find little resonance in a given context, we still know little about the factors facilitating the occurrence of lone-actor radicalization despite unfavourable circumstances and the availability of collective strategic alternatives.

The present article sets out to address this puzzle, singling out some of the crucial factors explaining the adoption of individual rather than collective forms of far-right violence, in contexts where collective action is the norm. We tackle this question by focusing on the case of Italy, a country where the far right has remained relatively immune to the global trend towards horizontalisation of violent movements.[11, p. 83] From 1990

to 2017 against a background of sustained right-wing mobilization in the country,[12] and many episodes of violence involving grassroots organizations of the neo-fascist right,[13] Italy has witnessed only two notable episodes of lone-actor terrorism. The first was a failed bombing attempt against a newspaper in Rome in December 2000,[14] organised by a neo-fascist activist formerly involved in the armed organization NAR;[15] the second was the December 2011 attack by a lone gunman, Gianluca Casseri, active in the milieu of the extreme right-wing group *Casa Pound Italia*,[16] who went on a shooting spree in Florence, killing two Senegalese street vendors and wounding three others.[17]

Focusing on this latter episode as a 'deviant' case,[18] we argue that the choice between autonomous and collective violence is not only a matter of personal preferences and strategic choice. Rather, it also crucially depends on the degree of embeddedness of an individual in the larger radical milieu, and on the structure and nature of the radical movement itself. In line with extant literature suggesting that radicalisation ought to be considered as a social process rather than just an individual cognitive one,[19] we understand it as the shift to a set of beliefs and behaviours which endorse the use of violence as legitimate.[20] We categorise lone-actor terrorists based on three criteria: they must operate as an individual in the preparation and execution of the attack; they must not act as a formal member of a group or movement; and they must not act on the direct orders of a group.[21,22] However, this does not imply that they are socially or politically isolated - rather that the attack is individually conceived and perpetrated. Lone-actor radicalisation is therefore understood on a relational basis encompassing the formation and breaking of social ties across a range of political and personal settings, leading to greater or lesser embedding in specific radical political milieus.

In analytical terms, this implies explaining the occurrence of lone-actor violence in light of the structure and nature of the radical movement in which individuals are embedded. The case of the Florence 2011 shooting is then used as a deviant case[18] to understand what conditions lead to the choice of lone-actor tactics over more collective forms of violence, in a context where the latter are the norm. Having discussed the (relative) failure of the ideology of Leaderless Resistance to permeate extreme-right repertoires in Italy, which remain shaped by an inherited culture of strong hierarchical structures, we focus on the case of a man called Casseri to explain why attackers opt to act individually contrary to established theoretical assumptions on the non-occurrence of lone-actor terrorism. Specifically, we investigate how countervailing forces linked to the structure and legacy of the Italian Neo-Fascist movement nevertheless failed to prevent lone-actor terrorism. Focusing on the radicalization of Casseri, therefore, we seek to identify the conditions under which the lone-actor tactic is chosen in spite of the availability of collective strategic alternatives.

This article is organized as follows. In the next section, we introduce the concept of Leaderless Resistance and discuss the main traits of a relational approach to lone-actor terrorism. We then present the 2011 Florence shootings as a deviant case, and we discuss it in relation to the Italian political context, where the collective discipline and the legacy of the Neo-Fascist movement has heretofore undermined the diffusion of the strategy of Leaderless Resistance. We then appraise the case study from a relational perspective, illustrating how the specificities of relationship between the perpetrator and his socio-political context can potentially trigger lone-actor terrorism under specific circumstances. The conclusion presents the implications of this argument beyond the Italian case, suggesting that autonomous patterns of radicalization may still occur despite restrictive contextual and cultural opportunities, due to cognitive factors at the individual level, and the combination of macro- and meso-level factors: an active far-right milieu providing an "echo chamber" for potential lone actors, and the cautiousness of movements within this milieu in formally accepting new activists within their ranks.

Leaderless Resistance and Lone-Actor Radicalisation: An Overview

The notion of an isolated and self-reliant so-called "lone wolf" has been resoundingly debunked.[23] The most comprehensive dataset on lone-actor extremist violence has demonstrated that half of all cases had personal

contacts with political milieus, one third were members of parties or movements and in sixty-four percent of cases others had been informed about the attackers' plans.[3,24] Therefore, the dichotomy of "leaderless" and "truly leaderless" seems to refer to an argument that has had its day rather than being an accurate reflection of more recent findings from the field of study.[8] Recent research has focused less on the individual profiles of lone-actor terrorists themselves but has rather focused on their relations and ties with broader political milieus. This relational perspective argues that lone-actor radicalisation is not driven by individual personality traits or ideology per se, but by "processes of interaction between individuals and their social environment where radical frames of interpretation are encountered, adopted, and reinforced through social bonds, experiences, and emotions." [21] (see also:[22,25,26,27]) The loneliness of lone-actor terrorists is always relative, "derived from interactive patterns of relational embedding and disembedding in various social settings." [21] Accordingly, lone-ness is "not an inherent quality but a result of social processes triggered and shaped by individual lone actors' personalities and capacities for social interaction." [21] Furthermore, although lone-actor terrorists report with a higher rate of clinical and sub-clinical mental illness than the general population and individuals involved in collective forms of violence [28], it cannot be regarded as a causal factor by itself.[29] It has been argued that mental illness along with sub-clinical personality disorders, condition one's interactions – and different disorders like narcissism, psychopathy or depression result in different interactional challenges – with their immediate social environment. This often times renders it difficult for politically motivated individuals with mental illnesses to be included in collective radical endeavours due to perceptions of instability, or objections to domineering or erratic behaviour.

Research focusing on the forms and evolution of ties between lone-actor terrorists and the radical milieus with which they interact, has identified two dominant patterns of radicalisation: peripheral and embedded.[21] These patterns shed light on why individuals engage in personal violent projects, despite a potential preference for, or exposure to, a norm of collective violence. Although peripheral lone-actors internalize the beliefs of their ideological milieus of preference sufficiently to carry or attempt to carry out violent attacks, they fail to fully integrate or gain acceptance by their co-ideologues. On the other hand, embedded lone-actors are, as the term suggests, accepted by their contemporaries, can be prominent and respected actors in their milieu or indeed formal members of groups and organisations. Nevertheless, they decide to plot and carry out individual violent attacks,[21,30] leading to the question as to why an attacker would prefer to conduct an individual attack rather than a collective one with his/her comrades? Within this embedded form of lone-actor radicalization, there are two distinct sub-patterns: Formerly Embedded and Autonomous lone-actors. The former are individuals who leave or are rejected by movements to which they used to belong, for example returned foreign fighters (e.g. the former al-Shabab militant who tried to murder a Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard in 2010.[21]) Autonomous lone-actors are neither socially nor politically isolated and they combine non-violent activist careers in parallel to preparing their subsequent violent plots. They are firmly embedded in radical movements and usually have potential routes of advancing their objectives through more widespread forms of contentious or conventional campaigning.[21] There are three main reasons why an Autonomous lone-actor would choose to act alone.[21] Firstly, divergence from the group on questions of individual ideological preference; for example. Mohammed Bouyeri felt that his contemporaries in the Dutch Hofstad group did not give sufficient attention to the question of *Takfir*, so he executed Theo van Gogh on his own.[31] Secondly, they might question their comrades' actual commitment to violence like Timothy McVeigh who believed that most of the far-right American patriot milieu had no actual intention to engage in violence.[32]

This is often combined with fears of infiltration by security agencies which has undermined many collective movements.[9, p. 46] Thirdly, they may be excluded from violent clandestine activism because of perceived individual weaknesses, but they may have other skills of value to the broader forms of activism, reflecting the importance of trust in underground networks.[33, p. 60]

Regardless of ideology, Autonomous lone-actors make frequent use of the strategy of Leaderless Resistance. Leaderless Resistance was formally theorised in 1983 by American far-right militant Louis Beam who described it, in an eponymous article, as a "child of necessity" following federal government infiltration of conventionally structured movements.[4] Beam described the functioning of the concept as: "all individuals and groups operate independently of each other, and never report to a central headquarters or single leader for direction

or instruction, as would those who belong to a typical pyramid organization.[4] (see also [6,7,34,35]) It was also adapted for the European context particularly in Germany and Sweden.[36, p. 53] Anders Breivik explicitly lauded it as bring the best strategy for right-wing militants to avoid detection.[34] It is also present in the British far-right scene, with the killing of Labour M.P. Jo Cox in 2016 as a clear example of its application.[37]

It has been highlighted that autonomous lone-actor attacks are better organized and more deadly than other forms of lone-actor violence. The shared know-how and collective morale inherent in their activism in a broader militant milieu ensure that their attack preparations are more prolonged and systematic.[38] Importantly they also obtain moral and political support from these milieus bolstering their motivation to continue with the violent struggle and maintaining their identity as righteous vanguards struggling on behalf of their chosen people.[39, p. 982] Indeed, without this “echo chamber” of the radical right milieu whereby potential lone-actors’ beliefs are publicly validated and their opponents vilified and de-humanized,[41,42] the motivation to attack could dissipate over time.

Far-Right Violence in Italy: The Neo-Fascist Movement, a Deviant Case and Data

Against this background, previous research on right-wing terrorism during the post-war years underlined the rather “unique” characteristics of the Italian experience of extreme-right political violence.[45, p. 221] From the mid-1980s, the spiral of left- and right-wing terrorism came to an end, and the development of far-right politics in Italy realigned with the rest of Western Europe. As Communism no longer appeared to be a threat, right-wing activists progressively ‘demobilised’, and terrorism and political violence declined.[46] While the heirs of the Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*, MSI) – the most enduring Neo-Fascist organization in any advanced industrial country[12] – completed their transition to national conservatism,[47] new challengers emerged in the form of modern populist radical-right actors (Lega Nord), and the extra-parliamentary right flourished in a multiplicity of grassroots neo-fascist organizations, involved in street violence and subcultural activism.[43,48,49]

The structure of the contemporary extreme-right movement in Italy can thus be considered poli-cephalous, in that it displays traits of both centralization and segmentation.[50] The network is centralized in that it comprises a few actors in control of most internal exchanges; yet it is also segmented because marginal actors can participate to the political life of the movement without having to rely exclusively on central actors. While centralization is generally considered beneficial for collective action,[51] which explains the sustained far-right mobilization throughout recent decades, and the high presence of right-wing violence,[2] a segmented structure might facilitate individual forms of mobilization.[52]

Beam’s Leaderless Resistance pamphlet that has been circulating across extremist right-wing circles in the U.S. since the early nineties was only translated and discussed in the Italian context considerably later.[53]. This is due to cultural factors related to the nature and legacy of right-wing extremism in Italy. On the one hand, the Leaderless Resistance logic of violence by self-directed individuals or small cells does not coincide with some tenets of the subcultural Neo-Fascist ideology that dominates vast parts of Italian extreme-right milieus.[54] Interestingly, its tenets had been put into practise by late 19th and early 20th century Italian anarchists. Indeed, Italy’s brand of Neo-Fascist ideology tends to incentivize collective understandings of political participation, articulating a project for the collective rediscovery of the national identity. Even though violence plays a crucial role, thus, it generally does so by means of regulated collective practices, of either a symbolic or physical nature.[58]

On the other hand, the poor resonance of the notions of Leaderless Resistance in contemporary Italian extreme-right milieus is partly explained by the legacy of the strategic choices of Italian Neo-Fascism in the late 1970s, and most notably the “collective madness”[12, p. 189] that paved the way to the notion of *Spontaneismo armato*, or armed spontaneity.[55] This consisted in the formation of small autonomous groups which operat-

ed independently but with occasional overlap in personnel; they used to strike swiftly before disappearing. The strategy was shaped by a perception of violence as a personal, anti-system statement, but it was also conceived as the first stage of a revolutionary progression that would comprise terrorism and culminate in guerrilla warfare. The failure of this strategy in integrating the extreme-right into a collective movement, the many victims it produced even before the massacre at Bologna's train station (eighty-five deaths on 2 August 1980), ultimately led to the demise of Italy's armed Neo-Fascism in the 1980s.[12] In sum, Leaderless Resistance has heretofore found little resonance in Italian Neo-Fascist milieus, mainly due to the legacy of the failure of armed spontaneity, and the subsequent state repression that it generated.

Nevertheless, the morning of 13 December 2011, Gianluca Casseri, a 50-year-old accountant who had a long history of engagement with local far-right groupings, drove to a crowded street market in the periphery of Florence. There, he shot at a group of Senegalese market traders, killing two: 40-year old Samb Modou and 54-year old Diop Mor, and wounding another. His rampage continued two hours later at the central market of Florence, where Casseri fired at, and injured two other street vendors of African origin. After fleeing the market, the killer drove into an underground parking lot. According to the public prosecutor of Florence, Casseri shot himself dead in his car, as the police closed in on him (Doc. Police I).

The subsequent investigation revealed that Casseri was not a very communicative person. He had recently moved to Florence from the smaller Tuscan town of Pistoia (Police Interview I; II and III). The Italian Neo-Fascist organization CasaPound, confirmed that Casseri was a "sympathizer" who had frequented some of the initiatives of the group and held talks at public events co-organized by CasaPound about a historical novel he had published the previous year. The group, however, denied that Casseri was ever a formal member or a militant of CasaPound. [40] While the attack was racially motivated according to authorities, the official investigation was closed without confirming the hypothesis that the killer had accomplices in the planning and the execution of the homicides (Document II). Furthermore, there is no evidence that Casseri had shared his intentions prior to the shootings (Document I).

Focusing on the Florence 2011 shooting, this article is thus based on a deviant case study design.[18] The underlying idea is that while collective far right mobilization (and violence) would be the norm in Italy, the case of Casseri represents a deviation from this norm. This type of design facilitates a detailed examination of a negative deviant case, and it permits an exploration of the conditions in which an event that would ordinarily not be expected to occur actually happens. Accordingly, the analytical strategy will be oriented at examining in detail a case in which lone actor terrorism occurred, in a context in which it was predicted not to take place, with the goal of identifying mechanisms clarifying or extending existing explanations for the choice of individual rather than collective violence.

To this end, the empirical investigation of the case makes use of a mix of primary and secondary data. By combining these multiple empirical materials and sources by means of triangulation, we examine in detail the relationship between the lone actor terrorist, and the milieu in which he was embedded.[44] Specifically, with respect to Italy's far right milieu, we rely on existing information from empirical research on the ideology, practice and strategy of Italian Neo-Fascist organizations. This includes historical accounts on political violence and radicalization in the post-war years,[12] as well as empirical research conducted by the authors on the repertoires of action of the contemporary far-right, and most notably CasaPound Italia.[13,16,43]

Furthermore, we make use of primary data stemming from the official investigation by Italian authorities in the aftermaths of the shootings to discuss the personal and psychological background of the killer, as well as his *modus operandi*. These data includes police reports and files from the investigative proceedings (health assessments, interrogation of the perpetrator's peers and relatives, results from the investigation of his house, email and computer), as well as the ruling by the Italian court that assessed the case (see: Appendix 1).

Finally, to analyse the radical movement in which Gianluca Casseri was embedded, and the nature of his involvement, we rely on data from primary sources retrieved at the time of the massacre, most notably four in-depth interviews conducted by one of the authors with militants of CasaPound in Florence a few months after the shootings (see: Appendix 2). This information is complemented with additional material that could be retrieved from non-governmental organizations that have contested the result of the official investigation, and have conducted further research on Casseri's prior activities, political engagement and publications (all quotes included in text have been translated from Italian to English by the authors).

This data was systematically assessed, using a coding frame focused on capturing the social embeddedness of Casseri vis-à-vis CasaPound and the Italian Fascist milieu, as well as the factors explaining his choice of individual rather than collective violence. The coding frame was informed by extant studies of lone-actor radicalization and leaderless resistance but left flexible and open in order to explore and capture the interplay between the Neo-Fascist movement culture and autonomous lone-actor radicalization.

The Florence Shootings 2011: Autonomous Lone-Actor Terrorism in a Neo-Fascist Movement

As we have seen, lone-actor radicalization in Italy has been limited by restrictive cultural opportunities linked to the legacy of past movements, and by the presence of available options for collective-level violence in Italy's active extreme-right movement. Nevertheless, the case of the Florence shootings in 2011 coincides with the definition of an autonomous lone-actor developed by Malthaner and colleagues.[21] Casseri operated individually in the preparation and the execution of the attack, he did not act on the direct orders of a group, nor was he a formal member of a group. In this section, we look at Casseri's relational embeddedness within the extreme-right movement to explain how lone-actor radicalization occurs in settings dominated by collectivised forms of violent organisation.

Indeed, while the attack was individually led, Casseri was neither socially nor politically isolated. The investigation uncontroversially confirmed that he was connected to CasaPound Italia. His embeddedness in the movement, however, was only partial, since his personality made him partially incompatible with the type of collective action – including violent confrontation – that is tolerated and promoted in this Neo-Fascist subcultural milieu. In this respect, our interviewees confirm that Casseri's peculiar psychological profile confined him to an intermediate position vis-à-vis CasaPound. He was considered potentially damaging to the movement and was never fully integrated in the group but as he did not seem to constitute an actual danger, he was never fully excluded from it either. As a result, Casseri was relegated to a subordinate, form of participation in the group's collective milieu. We argue that lone-actor radicalization is facilitated by the partial embedding in radical political milieus which serve as an “echo chamber” amplifying the public validation of his beliefs, without however exerting the degree of social control that vertically structured far-right movements normally exert in the Italian context.

Casseri was known for holding far-right ideals within CasaPound in both Pistoia (his hometown) and Florence. CasaPound Italia is a political organization originating from the youth branch of a pre-existing political party of the Neo-Fascist area (*Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore*). In 2008, a small group of militants left the party under the leadership of Gianluca Iannone, a recognized public figure in the Neo-Fascist music subculture. In the following months, the group started the ‘metapolitical’ project of CasaPound Italia, as a youth cultural centre promoting alternative music events alongside demonstrative political actions. In a few years, CasaPound has been able to develop an innovative political language and imagery, largely inspired by the experiences of 1970s youth Neo-Fascism, thus attracting both nostalgic Neo-Fascists and younger recruits. By the late 2000s, CasaPound was actively engaged not only on the internet and in the Neo-Fascist subculture, but also with demonstrative political actions, occupations, as well as street clashes with political opponents and the police.[16] In 2013 and 2018 CasaPound contested elections with its own candidates, but with little success.

The links between Casseri and the Neo-Fascist movement followed two parallel lines. On the one hand, Casseri was a fan and a writer of fantasy novels. He had a passion for fantasy literature and had active ties with a number of subcultural groups of fantasy fiction, which in the Italian context at times overlap with Neo-Fascist circles. Furthermore, Casseri was a passionate reader of Fascist literature and philosophy, and allegedly self-defined as a follower of the doctrine of the Italian esoteric philosopher Julius Evola (Doc. Police IV). A police tap on his friends' phone after Casseri's death captured his friend recounting that around a year before the attack, Casseri picked him up in his car, dressed in the typical black shirt of the Fascist movement and drove around blaring songs of the Salò Republic while shouting "Viva il Duce" (Doc. Carabinieri V). Casseri had regular direct contact with militants of CasaPound, as confirmed by both the brother of the killer in a police interview, and by CasaPound officials themselves:

Since you are asking me, I would like to point out that, in fact, my brother hung out with members of the "CasaPound" organization in Pistoia. I remember that he once had flyers from this organization and that he had attached them to a wall in our house. They were flyers for an event to be held in Pistoia. This happened in September last year.

(Police Interview III)

Casseri was not a militant of our association, but he sometimes attended the offices in Pistoia. We have no reason to keep this a secret.

(Official statement by CasaPound, 13 December 2011)

The investigation confirmed that Casseri sent several emails to the organization in the months preceding the shootings, and that the last four emails that he sent from his email account were to CasaPound Pistoia (Doc. Police VI). Furthermore, he visited several websites of the Italian far right in the days preceding the shootings (Doc. Police VII). Even though the investigation could not identify any facilitator for Casseri's actions (Document II), the police investigation confirmed his connections with CasaPound, as well as his sympathies for extreme-right ideologies and his acquaintances in the far right milieu.

Sometimes he talked about people with black skin: it was part of his ideals to be against the blacks more than other ethnicities. I remember that once, several years ago, we stopped with the car at a traffic light. I remember that he went out of the car, he stole the bucket of a Maghrebi guy who stood there, poured it on the floor and ran away.

(CasaPound, 13 December 2011)

At the same time, our primary data offers evidence concerning Casseri's mental health. In the years preceding the shootings, and most notably from 2007 onwards, Casseri sought medical assistance for a number of psychological and physical problems before being diagnosed with depression in 2008 (Doc. Police II). He also suffered from diabetes, which according to one of the interviewees caused his sudden shifts of mood (Carabinieri Interview I).

His peers and relatives described Casseri as an introspective, taciturn person who seldom spoke about himself or his personal problems (Police Interview III). Reports confirm that Casseri had difficulties in building relationship with other people, especially with women. Furthermore, these tendencies had been exacerbated in the three years before the attack. His father had died and his mother had fallen ill with Alzheimer's, then one of his two close friends died and he moved out of his family home to live in an apartment in Florence. Most importantly, this happened at the same time as Casseri started intensifying ties with CasaPound (Doc. Police IV). These dramatic personal events whereby his prevailing social ties had begun to unravel before re-stabilising good enough new ones within a political milieu, seem to be an example of "unfreezing", which has been suggested as a mechanism of radicalization.[56, p. 82]

Concerning the relationship between Casseri and CasaPound, our data confirms the pattern of autonomous lone actor's partial embeddedness in a radical milieu, which we believe explains why the aforementioned countervailing structural factors did not sway Casseri away from lone-actor terrorism. Indeed, the embeddedness

of the killer in the movement was neither full nor straightforward. In an interview released a few days after the shooting, the national leader of CasaPound set out the official position of the group on this issue, reporting that:

The killer was an absolutely normal person. He was about fifty years old and he was an intellectual who wrote fantasy novels, among other things. He was above suspicion. What happened is a tragedy, because he was an introverted and lonely person.

(CasaPound, 13 December 2011)

It was also added that a political organization cannot be expected to possess a mental health certificate for all of the people taking part in its initiatives. In short, the argument is that Casseri was neither a militant, nor a member, but only a sympathizer of the group. While CasaPound made sure to stress that there was nothing 'unusual' about him, little is said about why he did not obtain a membership card, and why he was not considered an activist, despite being regularly involved in their actions, both offline and online, and participated in numerous activities organized and promoted by CasaPound in Tuscany.

This is partly explained by the peculiar nature of participation in a group like CasaPound, which is located at the crossroads between party and protest politics. Participation thus includes not only elements reminiscent of typical party organizations (such as the explicit adherence to the statute of the group, application to obtain a membership card, payment of a fee, etc), but also practices that are more typical of subcultural organizations (such as identity-building practices through leisure and sport activities, access to specific rituals of belonging, admittance to the groups' inner circle, bars and summer camps, etc.). These two dimensions of participation are, however, strictly intertwined since CasaPound does not envisage membership without active militancy. [57] The selection of who is entitled to be a member thus follows very strict, albeit informal, criteria. Activists are generally incorporated by means of co-optation by other members. After being introduced to the group, prospective activists are first invited to public events and leisure activities organised by CasaPound (such as also in the case of Casseri). This type of participation is understood as a way to test their motivation, before integrating them as active militants, entitled to full status and a membership card (Interview 1). This form of initial screening is clearly also essential to keep the more unpredictable, violent and extremist elements at bay. Supporters and sympathisers who do not wish to become active militants, instead, can be appointed as 'web supporters' in charge of promoting CasaPound Italia's messages, images, and activities on the Internet. Even web supporters, however, are screened by the central organization and – upon approval and payment of a fee – provided with an official card testifying to their affiliation to the group.

Neither of these forms of participation to the group was granted to Casseri. His affiliation with CasaPound was kept even more informal, despite him being actively involved in numerous public events and actions, which enabled the group leaders to argue that they bear no responsibility for Casseri's actions as he was not a formal 'member' – i.e. possessing a membership card. This, however, disregards the effect the racism and violent rhetoric of CasaPound had on Casseri, normalising violence and contributing to his motivation to conduct the attack.

The interviews conducted in the aftermaths of the attacks further illustrate the ambivalent relationship between CasaPound officials in Tuscany and Casseri, and certify his partial embeddedness in the local extreme-right milieu. On the one hand, Casseri was respected for his intellectual activity, for his motivation and adherence to right-wing ideals and values. On the other hand, CasaPound officials appear to be aware of the psychological distress that Casseri had been suffering in recent years.

I was not very familiar with him. He came every now and then to our public events in Pistoia. He was a typical case of someone a little bit weird [stranettino], but not enough to raise some suspicion in us that this weirdness might lead him to become violent. Otherwise we would have told him to go. As I was mentioning before for these other people: there is plenty of people that we send away because they are too weird. He was not like that.

(Interview II)

I really cannot understand how it is possible that he held a gun. With his depression, they renewed his license.

(Interview III)

These quotes illustrate the specific form of relational interaction existing between Casseri and the local far-right radical milieu. CasaPound officials certify that they were aware that Casseri had some psychological difficulties. While his behaviour was not enough to justify his exclusion from the group (unlike what allegedly happened with other potential members; Interview II), it was certainly sufficient to deny Casseri access to full membership. The collective self-defence mechanism of CasaPound identified Casseri as a potential danger, but not as a concrete one: this led to his partial embeddedness in the group, as he was a participant without membership. On the one hand, this ambivalent position ruled out the possibility for Casseri to engage in collective violence within the extreme-right movement, as this form of participation only pertains to militants who are fully embedded in the group. On the other hand, Casseri was an autonomous lone-actor, who benefitted from an “echo chamber” validating his beliefs, while being subject to little social control by the group, as certified by the fact that there is no evidence that he communicated his intentions to carry out the attack with anyone beforehand (Doc. Carabinieri IV; V).

Concluding Remarks

Consistent with other research on lone-actor radicalization, Casseri is a clear example of an autonomous lone actor who radicalized in a collective environment but proceeded to conduct an attack of his own design and execution. This reinforces the evidence that most lone actors are indeed not isolated individuals but are shaped by their existing relations and ties to political movements. This article has argued that Casseri’s militant trajectory within the milieu around CasaPound was undermined by his erstwhile colleagues’ perception of him as somebody unsuited to positions of responsibility or indeed collective violence. Nevertheless, he was welcomed and acknowledged for his intellectual capacities. This highlights the important role of radical milieus in the violent socialisation of its adherents, which importantly need not necessarily be formal members. Thus, in order to understand the radicalisation of individuals who proceed to carry out lone-actor attacks, it is not sufficient to focus on the perpetrator him/herself but on their broader sets of relational ties, their formation and rupture, intensification and lessening.

The deviant case of Casseri also serves as a reminder that the analysis of lone-actor terrorism, demands that greater attention be afforded to historical and structural features of specific contexts’ repertoires of violent contention. In this respect, the Casseri attack brings the broader *modus operandi* of the Italian far-right into question, as it shows how autonomous radicalization might take place even in contexts where collective action is the norm. As we have shown, in fact, violence in the Italian far-right is highly structured and collective in nature, mainly due to the legacy of the immense bloodshed in the 1970s and 1980s. The horizontality and networked disaggregation of far-right movements evident in North America and other European countries has not taken root in the Italian context. Violence in the Neo-Fascist Italian milieu remains controlled within the far-right movement. Repeated reports attest to the emergence of publicly unacknowledged and juridically unpunished forms of violent mobilization by the extreme-right in recent years. Investigative research reported more than fifty random punitive expeditions against migrants in a single year (2013). These are allegedly conceived as rites of initiation for young militants in CasaPound, but could also be potentially considered as violent outlets which pre-empt the likelihood of lone actor violence countervailing forces for autonomous radicalization. The attackers act in small groups and usually target victims of migrant backgrounds, (mainly Bangladeshi citizens in Rome), with the expectation that they will not press charges due to their fear of attracting the attention of the authorities or their lack of social and linguistic skills to report such crimes. [58], [59]

However, as we have illustrated, neither the legacy of Italy’s right-wing terrorism, nor the theoretical avail-

ability of collective alternatives, discouraged individual radicalization in the case of Casseri. Based on extant theories and primary sources, we have suggested that this is mainly a result of his partial embeddedness in the far-right milieu, resultant from CasaPound's unwillingness to extend full membership to him which would have allowed him access to the movement's organised practises of collective violence. Since the Florence killings there has only been one other potential lone-actor attack by a former *Lega Nord* candidate in Macerata in 2018. However, given the heightened anti-migrant sentiment in Italy and the muted public response to the Macerata shootings, the risk remains that it might be viewed by others of a similar disposition to Casseri, as a legitimate course of action.

This article has taken a single, deviant, case study to attempt to understand how and whether the modus operandi of the Italian far-right has evolved in light of broader international trends, in particular the rise of Leaderless Resistance. It has shown that even though contextual and cultural opportunities make lone-actor terrorism less likely in Italy, autonomous patterns of radicalization may still occur thanks to the combination of an active far-right milieu, which provides the needed "echo chamber", and the cautiousness of movements regarding who can earn the status of full militant. As the case of Casseri shows, while there are opportunities for participation in collective violence within the far-right movement, these are limited for subjects considered "risky" or less suited to such tasks. This argument regarding strategic preference for lone actor or collective violence in contexts where both are potentially realisable is exploratory; it could be bolstered by the analysis of further cases both within Italy (the Macerata attack) and international comparisons with cases in other European countries with a traditionally strong far-right scene, such as Greece, Turkey or Germany. Finally, it would also benefit from application to other ideological contexts such as Salafi-Jihadist milieus which incorporate both collective and individual forms of violence.

Acknowledgements:

The authors would like to thank Dario Salvetti for his support with the retrieval of the primary data used in this article. We are also grateful to our friends and colleagues, including Giorgia Bulli, Matteo Albanese and Caterina Froio, who participated in the original research project on CasaPound, for stimulating discussions and feedback on our ideas. We would like to further thank our former colleagues in the PRIME consortium on Lone Actor radicalisation for their critical feedback and previous collaboration which shaped this article. We would especially like acknowledge the role of Stefan Malthaner in developing this relational understanding of lone actor radicalisation.

This project has received funding from European Commission 7th Framework Programme Grant, No.608354 (PRIME) FP7-SEC-2013-1.

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APPENDIX 1: List of Primary Sources

Criminal Proceedings

- Document I – Judge of Florence: Certification of closure of investigation (March 2013)
- Document II – Office of the Public Prosecutor request of closure of investigation (27/11/2012)
- Document III – Criminal Proceedings I (November 2015)
- Document IV – Criminal Proceedings II (November 2015)
- Document V – Search and seizure of items authorization (13/12/2011)

Investigative Reports

- Doc. Police I – Report of suicide Gianluca Casseri (December 2011)
- Doc. Police II – report G. Casseri health and mental health disorders (13/12/2011)
- Doc. Police III – Report on threats to the Senegalese community (14/12/2011)
- Doc. Police IV – Report phone tracking operations (14/12/2011)
- Doc. Police V – Report browsing chronology G. Casseri (December 2011)
- Doc. Police VI – Report email account G. Casseri (December 2011)
- Doc. Police VII – Report browsing internet point (December 2011)
- Doc. Carabinieri I – Report search and seizure report G. Casseri residence (December 2011)
- Doc. Carabinieri II – Report scientific evidence (20 December 2011)

Doc. Carabinieri III – Report street violations and criminal record G. Casseri (16/12/2011)

Doc. Carabinieri IV – Report G. Casseri house (15/12/2011)

Doc. Carabinieri V – Report phone tapping (14-29/12/2011)

Doc. Carabinieri VI – Report email account G. Casseri (December 2011)

Doc. Carabinieri VII– Report hard disk G. Casseri (December 2011)

Police and Investigative Interviews

Police Interview I – Witness (13 December 2011)

Police Interview II – Friend of G. Casseri (13/12/2011)

Police Interview III – Brother of G. Casseri (13/12/2011)

Carabinieri Interview I – Friend of G. Casseri (21/12/2011)

Carabinieri Interview II – Interviews II: colleague of G. Casseri (21 December 2011)

Carabinieri Interview III – neighbour I (15/12/2011)

Carabinieri interview IV – neighbour II (15/12/2011)

Carabinieri interview V – neighbour III (15/12/2011)

Carabinieri interview VI – neighbour IV (15/12/2011)

Carabinieri interview VII – neighbour V (15/12/2011)

Carabinieri interview VIII – neighbour VI (15/12/2011)

APPENDIX 2: List of Semi-structured Research Interviews

Interview 1: Activist *CasaPound Italia* (Florence, 30/03/2012)

Interview 2: Local official *CasaPound Italia* (Florence, 19/04/2012)

Interview 3: Local official *CasaPound Italia* (Florence, 19/04/2012)

Interview 4: Local official, youth section *CasaPound Italia* (Florence, 19/04/2012)

Background and Preparatory Behaviours of Right-Wing Extremist Lone Actors: A Comparative Study

by Noémie Bouhana, Emily Corner, Paul Gill, and Bart Schuurman

Abstract

The threat posed by lone actors ranks high on the list of terrorism-related security concerns. In recent years especially, discussions about these perpetrators have focused primarily on those associated with, or inspired by, Islamic State and other jihadist entities. However, a significant portion of lone actors actually hail from right-wing extremist milieus. This article serves to draw attention to this subcategory of lone-actor terrorists, with a particular focus on their backgrounds and pre-attack behaviours. To that end, two datasets are presented that allow a comparison to be made between right-wing extremist lone actors and other ideologically-motivated lone actors. While several differences are noted, perhaps the most surprising finding is the degree of similarity between right-wing extremist lone actors and those adhering to different ideological currents. The results contribute to a knowledge-base that can inform discussion about whether risk assessment tools and protocols should differentiate between ideological categories of lone actor terrorists.

Keywords: Lone-actor terrorism, right-wing extremism, pre-attack behaviour, background characteristics, comparative, risk analysis

Introduction

Lone-actor terrorists are considered by police and intelligence agencies to constitute a particularly dangerous threat.[1-5] Although new research draws into question whether lone actors are indeed as isolated and capable as is sometimes claimed,[6] the fact remains that many recent acts of terrorism were carried out by individuals rather than groups. From Anders Breivik's 2011 massacre in Norway,[7] to a spate of run-over attacks seen in Europe in 2016 and 2017 and, particularly in the United States, a continuing trend of firearms-enabled assaults, terrorist attacks carried out by lone individuals appear to be on the rise.[8]

While the contemporary terrorist threat is commonly associated with Islamist extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State (IS), a significant proportion of lone-actor attacks are perpetrated by individuals with a right-wing extremist background. Some of the most well-known lone-actor terrorists, such as Eric Rudolph, David Copeland and Anders Breivik, hailed from this particular ideological milieu. The extent to which these extremist right-wing (henceforth, XRW) lone actors differ from other lone terrorists in terms of their background and attack behaviour is an empirical question with implications for risk assessment and attack prevention. To the extent that analysts rely on specific sets of indicators to assess the lone actor threat, differences between ideological categories of lone actors are likely to be salient.

The present article presents a comparative analysis between XRW lone actors and other ideologically-motivated lone actors. Given the particular relevance of these indicators to risk assessment by law enforcement analysts, this article also includes an analysis of a sub-sample of XRW lone actors' cases particularly rich in information on attack planning and preparation behaviour. In doing so, we aim to contribute to a knowledge-base that can inform discussion about whether risk assessment tools and protocols should differentiate between ideological categories of lone actor terrorists.

Background: Right-Wing Extremists and Lone-Actor Terrorism

Lone-actor terrorism is not unique to one particular extremist ideology, yet in some ways its 20th and 21st century emergence is strongly tied to developments in right-wing extremism.[9] Starting in the late 1960s, as Kaplan

explains, elements within the neo-Nazi movement in the United States came to see the idea of sustaining a mass revolutionary movement as unfeasible due to a lack of popular support. Instead, they began advocating for a violent 'propaganda by the deed' approach, to be undertaken by small cells of militants, essentially emulating similar tactics deployed by left-wing extremist groups such as the Weather Underground. This trend towards more individualized action was strengthened during the 1970s and 1980s by the death or imprisonment of leading members of the right-wing extremist milieu, which demonstrated the state's power and the movement's inability to organize a sustained resistance.

However, it was the 1992 Ruby Ridge incident that propelled leaderless resistance to the forefront. A couple of months after the deadly shootout between law-enforcement personnel and the Weaver family, some 160 far-right extremists formed a so-called 'Sacred Warfare Action Tactics committee' to 'evaluate what our people would be forced to consider should tyranny and despotism become the order of the day'. The committee recommended Louis Beam's concept of 'Leaderless Resistance' to its supporters. Between the events of Ruby Ridge and Waco a year later, Leaderless Resistance moved from being an 'isolated theory' to being 'seen as a matter of survival in the face of a government now determined to eradicate the righteous remnant of the patriot community once and for all'.^[10]

Beam's mantle was later taken up by other white supremacists, such as Tom Metzger and Alex Curtis in the early 1990s. While Beam's essay allowed for small autonomous cells as well as lone actors, both Metzger and Curtis pushed the lone actor to the forefront. Since the early 2000s, Leaderless Resistance, and the lone-actor terrorist attacks this concept inspires, have been embraced by Islamist extremists as well. In a pattern similar to that seen among right-wing extremists, the concept gained traction through the force of example, because leading ideologues promoted it and, most recently, because IS used its own power and reach to advocate its adoption.^[11-14]

Leaderless Resistance and lone-actor terrorism are thus not unique to right-wing extremism. Yet the strong ties between these concepts and the right-wing extremist ideological current make it a particularly interesting one to study in order to gain a better understanding of the lone-actor violence it has spawned. On a more practical note, the considerable (media) attention given to jihadist extremism has arguably served to under-emphasize the threat of terrorism by right-wing extremists. While *fatal* violence perpetrated XRW actors appears to have declined in the European context,^[15, 16] it is a more prevalent form of violent extremism in North America.^[17-19] In both geographical contexts, moreover, lone actors are often the (suspected) perpetrators of XRW violence.^[9] Gaining a better understanding of the pre-attack behaviours of XRW lone actors, as well as a sense of differences in background and individual indicators between XRW actors and others, thus serves to strengthen a potentially under-researched aspect of contemporary terrorism, and can contribute practice-oriented insights to inform the detection and prevention of these types of attacks.

Data

The data used in the following analyses is made up of two distinct sets of lone-actor terrorists. Both sets define lone actor terrorists primarily as individuals who, in media reporting or existing academic work, are described as operating autonomously and independently of a group, for instance in terms of training and target selection. Also included are individual terrorists with command and control links to a terrorist group, but who carry out the attack by themselves.

The first set is an expansion of Gill and colleagues' dataset, updated to the year 2016 to make up the EU-funded 'FP7 PRIME Project' dataset. This sample includes 125 individuals who engaged in, or planned to engage in, a lone-actor terrorist attack in North America and Europe, and were convicted for their actions or who died in the commission of their offence, since 1990. Data collection was limited to the post-1990 period, because considerable part of the information on lone actors was drawn from the LexisNexis archive, whose records are less complete before the 1990s. Further to the addition of new cases, the original Gill et al. codebook was augmented and updated. The inclusion of the 40 new variables, which relate chiefly to radicalization

processes and antecedent behaviours, was guided by a custom Risk Analysis Framework (RAF)[20] designed to operationalize the theoretical models of radicalization and terrorist action proposed by Bouhana and Wikström.[1]

From a risk assessment perspective, the purpose of the RAF is to guide the identification, interpretation and evaluation of indicators, which are likely to vary across cases, time and geography, by setting out clearly the categories of processes to which these indicators relate, such as individual susceptibility to moral change or selection for exposure to radicalising settings. From a research perspective, the framework motivates the selection of indicators which are hypothesized to be causally or behaviourally meaningful.

These data were put together by coding information extracted from open-source news reports, sworn affidavits and, when possible, openly available first-hand accounts. Most of these sources were identified through LexisNexis searches. Each observation was coded by three independent coders. After an observation was coded, the results were reconciled in two stages (coder A with coder B, then coders AB with coder C). In cases where the three coders could not agree, a senior researcher resolved differences based on a re-examination of the original sources. These decisions factored in the relative reliability of the original sources (e.g. trial proceedings versus news report in the immediate aftermath of events).

The second dataset used in this article focuses specifically on attack planning and preparation and is made up of a subset of individuals drawn from the PRIME dataset described in the previous paragraphs. Cases within this larger PRIME dataset were first ranked according to richness of information regarding planning and attack preparation antecedent behaviours, as a more detailed exploration of these issues could only be realized if sufficient data was available. This led to 43 cases being retained for further analysis. The data collection process and discussions with colleagues led to the inclusion of a further 12 cases for which pre-attack information was particularly rich: two Canadian, one American, one Danish and eight Dutch individuals. For the purpose of the present article, two additional German XRW cases have been added, bringing this second, attack planning and preparation specific dataset up to a total of 57 individuals.[3]

As with the larger dataset, information was gathered primarily from open sources, such as newspaper articles and terrorist biographies, but where possible cases were assessed using first-hand information drawn from police investigative files, autobiographical materials, interviews with subject matter experts and, more commonly, sentencing information published by courts. Open-source data on terrorism should always be critically evaluated in terms of reliability and accuracy. Several other data-collection issues must also be acknowledged. First, there is the media's tendency to underreport failed or foiled attacks, making less information available on cases that could provide key insights into how terrorism can be prevented.[21] Secondly, media coverage of terrorism tends to be skewed towards jihadist-inspired attacks, particularly where the perpetrators are foreign, meaning that instances of XRW terrorism may not be consequently reported as such or attract less coverage and are thus more difficult to reconstruct in detail.[22] Concerted efforts to gather as much information as possible from a wide array of sources was used to overcome these limitations, but they must be kept in mind.

Both of the aforementioned datasets encompass individuals across the ideological spectrum (extreme right-wing, extreme left-wing, religiously inspired, or those driven by so-called 'single-issue' concerns). While these samples cannot claim to make up the entire lone-actor population, they are the most extensive and detailed research datasets of their kind to date.

The following analyses draw from the respective strengths of each dataset. In the first section, a comparative, descriptive analysis of indicators is presented, contrasting XRW lone actors and the rest of the 125-strong sample, made up of religiously-inspired, left-wing and single-issue individuals. Inferential statistics are further used to test the significance of the observed differences. In the second section, a more in-depth look is taken at behaviours related specifically to the attack planning and preparation phase. While the smaller size of this second dataset precludes a full-fledged statistical comparison between the XRW subset and other cases, it does provide further insight into potential differences between actor categories.

Before proceeding to the result of these analyses, a definitional issue must be tackled. Predictably, there is

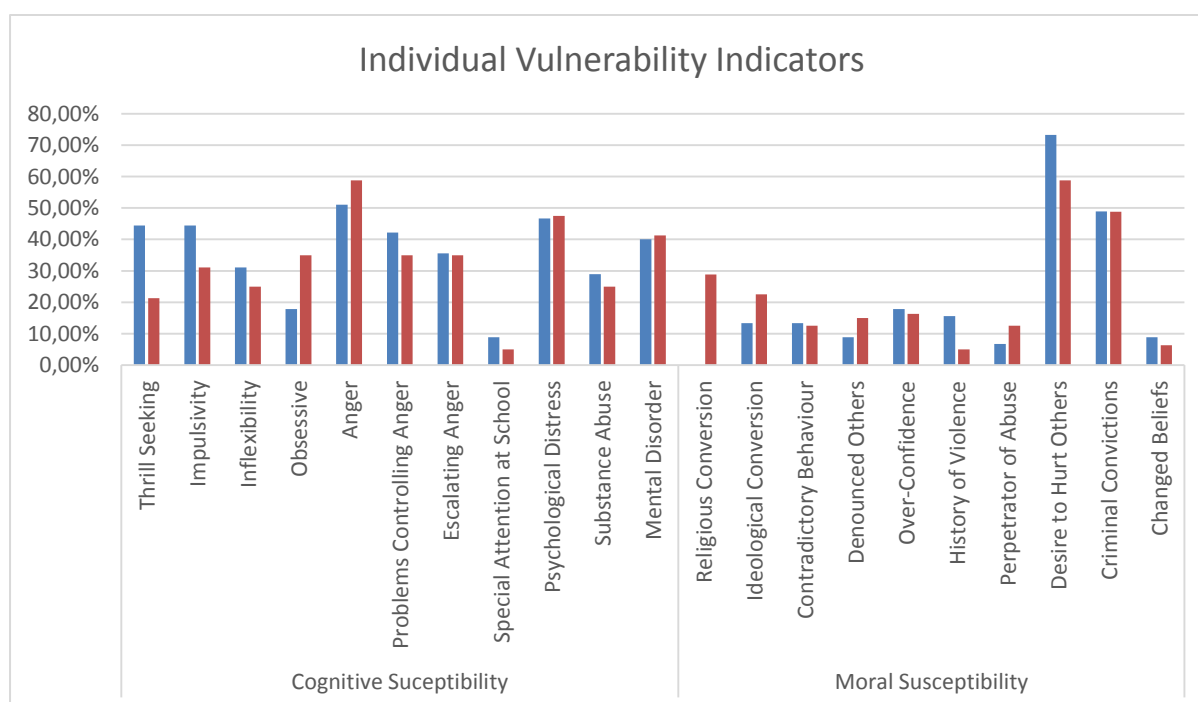
no single, widely accepted definition of what constitutes right-wing extremism or right-wing terrorism.[23, 24] Where jihadists can generally be defined by their adherence to extremist currents within Islam, what exactly is 'right-wing' in this context? As Mudde illustrates, definitions of right-wing extremism range from those that focus on a single feature to ones with more than ten constituting elements. The most commonly recurring elements, however, are nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy and a desire for a strong state.[24] These elements provide useful markers of right-wing extremism, but their application to the datasets underpinning this article presents several interpretative challenges.

Both PRIME datasets include numerous individuals who clearly match the elements of right-wing extremism that Mudde distilled. Yet, there are also several cases in which the degree of adherence to these precepts is more ambiguous. Lone actors motivated by anti-abortion convictions are generally not counted as right-wing extremists, despite the fact that some also displayed an overlap with right-wing extremist beliefs or operated in social circles on the fringes of such a milieu. More difficult were the lone actors driven by what could be termed 'anti-government' views. For some, such as Walter Leroy Moody, these grievances had a distinctly personal rather than political origin, allowing them to be quickly dismissed from the case selection. But for individuals such as Timothy McVeigh, this is more challenging because his anti-government views, while politically motivated, were not solely right-wing extremist in orientation.

These ambiguities should be kept in mind when interpreting the results presented below. With regards to the larger dataset, 45 right-wing extremist individuals are identified as *primarily motivated by right-wing extremist beliefs* and are compared against the rest of the sample, while 28 (out of 57) such individuals are present in the second dataset selected for the richness of information on attack planning and preparatory behaviour. The inclusion criteria, and the fact that the samples do not encompass all known instances of right-wing extremist lone-actor violence to have taken place in Northern America and Europe, must be kept in mind when interpreting the results presented next. While we cannot and do not claim fully generalizable insights into right-wing extremist lone-actor terrorists, our findings do present an important first step towards understanding the backgrounds and pre-attack behaviours of this particular subset of the lone-actor threat in a comparative light.

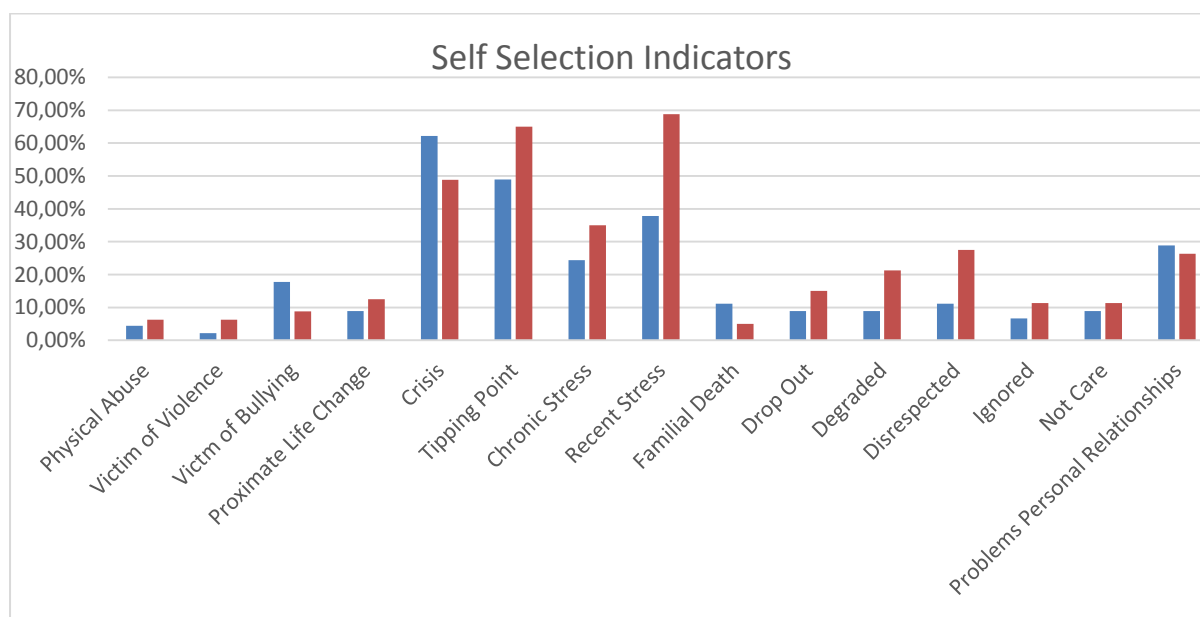
Results: Comparison between XRW Lone-Actor Terrorists and other Lone Actors

The following section provides a comparative snapshot of key indicators between XRW lone actors (blue) and other categories of lone actors (orange). They are presented by category, as set out in the PRIME RAF. [20] Briefly, vulnerability indicators are hypothesized to be markers belonging to the cognitive and moral domains and related to an individual's vulnerability to moral change (i.e. vulnerability to the adoption of terrorism-supportive beliefs). Selection indicators are likewise hypothesized to be markers for self and social processes which put individuals at risk of exposure to radicalizing and criminogenic settings. Motivation and capability indicators relate to movement from propensity to action and the actor's capability to carry out an attack successfully (the perception of which plays a crucial part in sustaining his or her motivation). Leakage and attack indicators are outcome markers commonly included in the behavioural analysis of terrorist events.

Individual Vulnerability Indicators

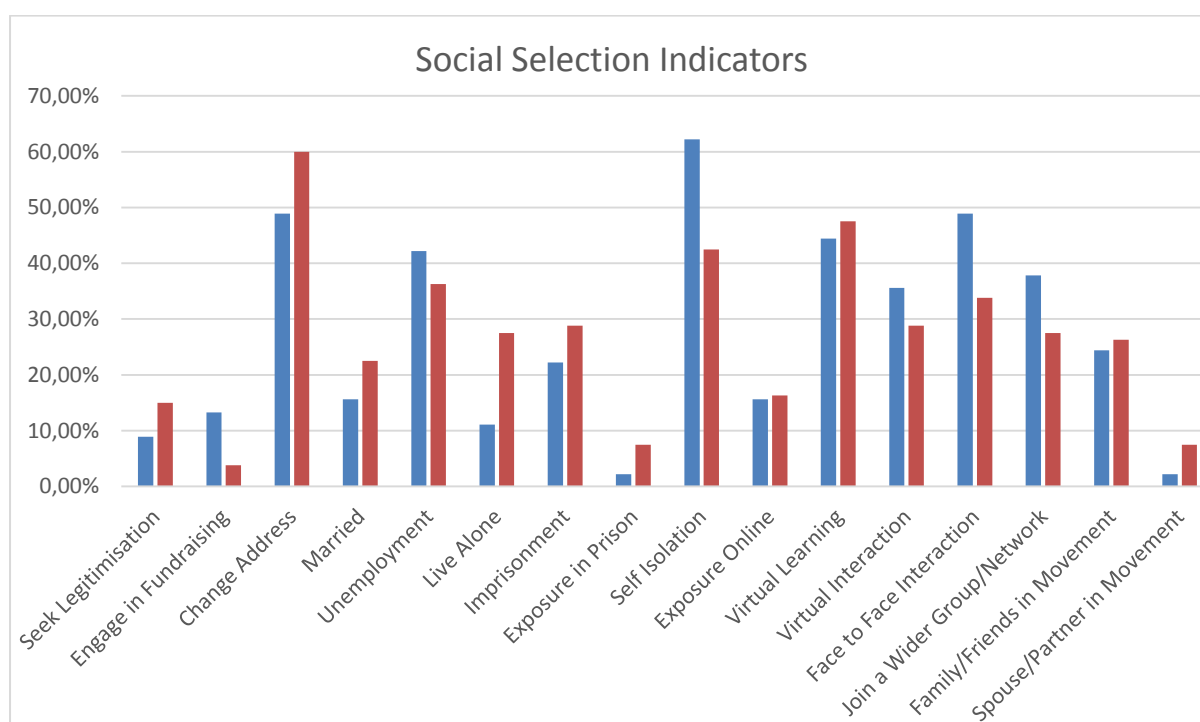
It is in the category of vulnerability indicators that most of the statistically-significant differences between the XRW and other lone actors are found, notably in terms of morality-related markers of susceptibility. With regard to indicators of cognitive susceptibility, both groups are characterized by fairly high prevalence of several indicators which are common to other categories of behavioural problems, including common criminality and other high risk behaviours.[25] This is notably the case for the XRW actors which are the concern of this article, almost half of whom are described as thrill seeking (44.4%), compared to 21.3% of other lone actors (henceforth, OLAs) (7.435, $p=0.006$), and impulsive (44.4%) compared to 31.1% of OLAs. Anger is also a prevalent indicator within the sample (51.1%), with 42.2% described as having problems controlling their anger (35% of the OLAs) and 35.6% noted for the fact that their anger had been escalating (35% of the OLAs). Psychopathological indicators have reemerged as a topic in the terrorism literature and it is notable that 46.7% of the XRW actors experienced psychological distress, while 40% had a diagnosed mental disorder, which is very similar to the OLAs (47.5% and 41.3% respectively). It is notable that 28.9% of XRW actors were reportedly substance abusers, which is much higher than the base rate.[26] Here again, the prevalence for the OLAs is similar (25%).

As regards morality-related indicators of susceptibility, XRW actors are more likely to be raised in the country in which they carried out their attack (95.6% vs 66.3%; 14.332, $p=0.001$), while the OLAs are by far more likely to have been raised in a religious household (13.3% vs 86.7%; 15.679, $p=0.000$). Of note is the absence of any report of religious conversion in the XRW actors compared to the OLAs (25%; 13.393, $p=0.000$). However, it is not possible to tell whether these differences are exacerbated by reporting issues, whereby questions about past religious behaviour are only asked in the case of religiously-inspired actors, who make up a large proportion of the OLAs. XRW actors are more often identified as atheist (11.1% vs 5%; 45.674, $p=0.000$), while OLAs are more often identified as Muslim (0% vs 55%; 45.674, $p=0.000$). Unsurprisingly, very few instances of religious intensification are reported among XRW actors (2.2% vs 43.8% in OLAs; 24.221, $p=0.000$); reports of ideological intensification are also more prevalent among the OLAs (37.8% vs 56.3%; 3.931, $p=0.047$). XRW actors distinguish themselves by the high prevalence of the expressed desire to hurt others (73.3% of XRW actors and 58.5% of the OLAs), although the difference is not statistically significant. Noteworthy is that 48.9% of XRW actors had previous convictions, almost exactly the same as the OLAs (48.8%). However, XRW actors had a higher prevalence of a history of violence (15.6%) than their counterparts (5%; 3.984, $p=0.046$).

Selection Indicators

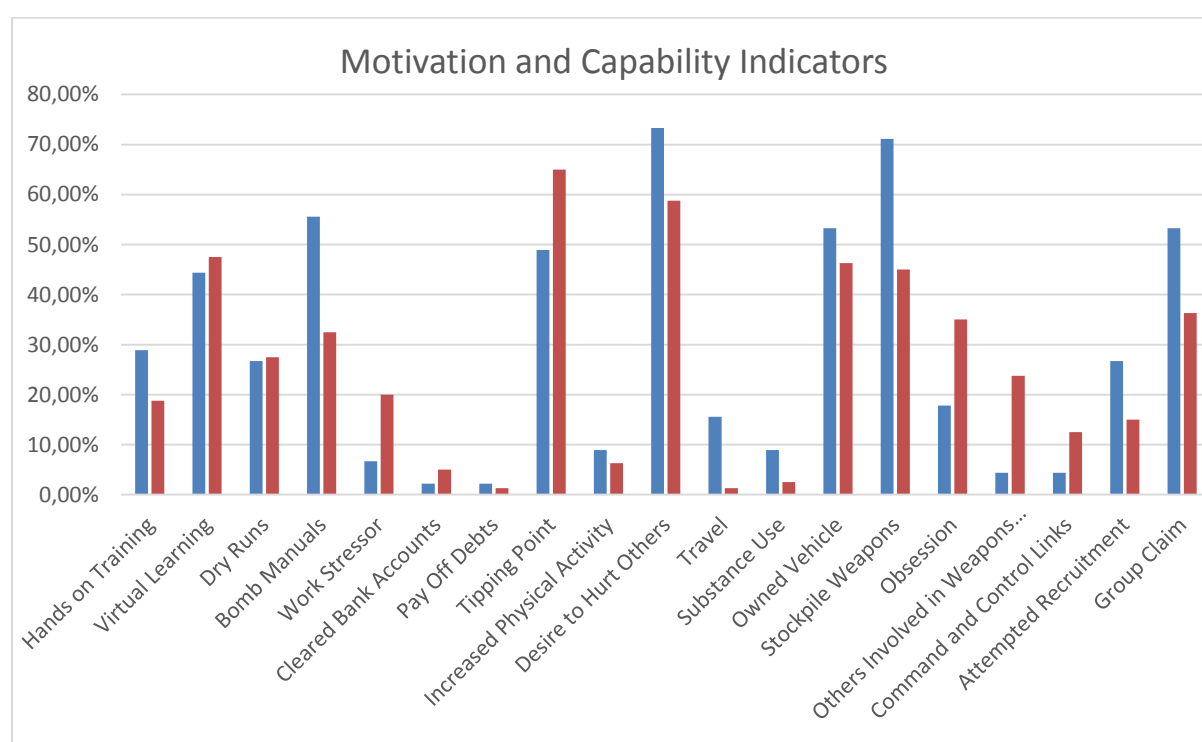
With regards to selection indicators (i.e. markers of possible vectors of exposure to the radicalizing ideology), almost no significant differences emerge in terms of self-selection indicators, the most prevalent of which are, as one might expect from the lone actor literature, the experience of a personal crisis (62.2% vs 48.8%), of a tipping point (48.9% vs 65%), chronic stress (24.4% vs 35%), recent stress (37.8% vs 68.8%) and problems in personal relationships (28.9% vs 26.3%). OLAs are significantly more likely to experience episodes of disrespect than XRW lone actors (11.1% vs 27.5%; 4.568, $p=0.033$).

Although the traditional criminological literature may have raised expectations otherwise,[27] risk factors associated with childhood, such as physical abuse (4.4% vs 6.3%), are not prevalent among either group, compared to the general base rate,[28] although XRW actors were more likely to be victim of bullying (17.8% vs 8.8%) than their counterparts.

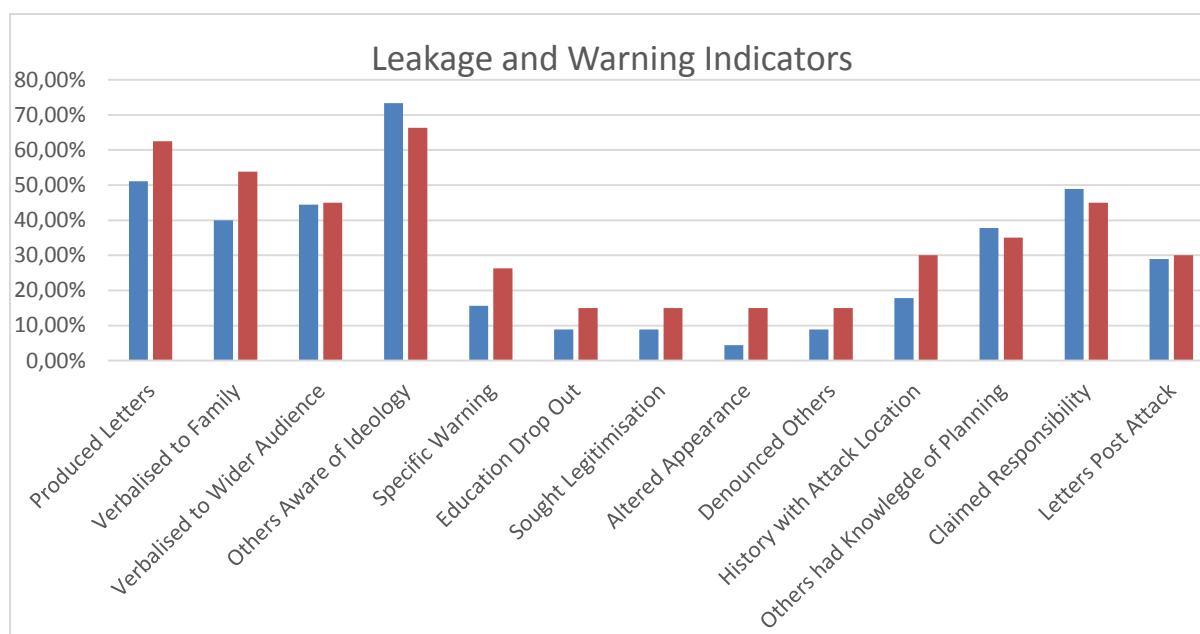
Social Selection Indicators

Analysis of social selection indicators (whereby the exposure vector is associated with social organization and belonging to particular social groups) reveal slightly more significant differences, to the extent that XRW actors are less likely to have experienced recent unemployment (17.8% vs 36.3%; 4.716, $p=0.030$) and to have lived alone at the time they adopted a terrorism-supportive ideology (11.1% vs 27.5%; 4.568, $p=0.033$), but more likely to have engaged in legal fundraising activities in connection with a political organisation (13.3% vs 3.8%, 3.959, $p=0.047$), to have consumed literature on other lone actors (37.8% vs 20%, 4.685, $p=0.030$) and to have consumed propaganda on lone actor methods (28.9% vs 10%, 7.351, $p=0.007$). No significant differences emerged with regard to prevalent social selection indicators such as self-isolation (62.2% vs 42.5%), online exposure (15.6% vs 16.3%), virtual learning (44.4% vs 47.5%), virtual interaction with other extremists (35.6% vs 28.8%), face-to-face interaction (48.9% vs 33.8%), having joined a wider group or network at some point (37.8% vs 27.5%), having family or friends belonging to a movement (24.4% vs 26.3%), or having a spouse or partner in the movement (2.2% vs 7.5%). Of note, given ongoing debates on the role of prison in radicalisation and involvement, is that while a non-negligible proportion of actors in both groups experienced imprisonment (22.2% vs 28.8%), prison is not a prevalent vector of exposure to the terrorism-supportive ideology for either group (2.2% vs 7.5%), as far as our data show.

Motivation and Capability Indicators



There are no significant differences between XRW actors and OLAs in terms of motivation and capability indicators, which are analytically related to the extent that perception of capability (the perception that one has the means and resources to carry out an action successfully) is hypothesized to be necessary to sustain the motivation to act over a period of time, especially when one is alone.[20] A majority of actors expressed a desire to hurt others (73.3% vs 58.8%) prior to engaging in terrorist action, an indicator which could flag susceptibility to moral change and as well as motivational processes, as does obsessive behaviour (17.8% vs 35%), experiencing work stressors (6.7% vs 20%) or tipping points (48.9% vs 65%), and substance use (8.9% vs 2.5%). The most prevalent capability indicators are the stockpiling of weapons (71.1% vs 45%), owning a vehicle (53.3% vs 46.3%), consulting bomb manuals (55.6% vs 32.5%), learning from virtual sources (44.4% vs 47.5%), and engaging in hands-on training (28.9% vs 18.8%) and in dry runs (26.7% vs 27.5%). A group claimed the attack in more than half of the XRW cases (53.3% vs 36.3%), though command and control links were more rarely present, as expected for this actor category (4.4% vs 12.5%). XRW actors tended to have travelled more than OLAs prior to the attack (15.6% vs 1.3%) and to have attempted to recruit others (26.7% vs 15%), although others were more often involved in weapons procurement in OLA cases (4.4% vs 23.8%).

Leakage and Warning Indicators

The category where XRW actors and OLAs appear the most undifferentiated is that of leakage and warning indicators, where the same markers appear equally prevalent across the board. In over half of the cases, others were aware of the actors' ideological commitments prior to the attack (73.3% vs 66.3%). In over half or almost half of the cases, the offenders produced letters (51.1% vs 62.5%), expressed their violent intentions to family members (40% vs 53.8%) and/or to a wider audience (44.4% vs 45%) and claimed responsibility for the attack (48.9% vs 45%), sometimes by writing letters (28.9% vs 30%). OLAs tend to more often have a history with the attack location (17.8% vs 30%) and to issue specific warning (15.6% vs 26.3%), but these differences are not statistically significant.

Attack and Target Indicators

Ideology helps frame who is a justifiable target and shapes the repertoires of action deemed legitimate for the movement. It is therefore unsurprising that many significant differences appear between both ideologies for attack and target-related indicators. XRWs are less likely to attack at business locations (4.4% vs. 18.7%) but more likely to attack at private citizen locations (33% vs. 18.8%), and religious locations (22.2% vs. 5%). Given the significant differences in these location, it should be no surprise XRWs were also significantly more likely to attack private citizens (64.4% vs. 43.8%) but less likely to attack government targets (13.3% vs. 32.5%). XRWs were almost twice as likely (24.4% vs. 12.5%) to conduct multiple attacks, perhaps due to the greater preponderance of jihadist lone actors conducting suicide missions. There was no difference in the capability of XRWs and other ideologies in terms of their ability to implement an attack, conduct planning activities or kill people in the course of their actions. There was very little difference with regard to attack types in terms of XRWs proclivity in using bombs (44.3% vs. 37.9%), or firearms (35.4% vs. 39.1%); however other ideologies were significantly more likely to utilize bladed weapons (2.2% vs. 14.1%).

Results: Analysis of Pre-Attack Behaviour

The discussion now turns to look specifically at the second dataset to be developed during the PRIME project, which focuses in detail on lone actors' pre-attack behaviours. This part of the analysis disaggregates the findings presented in Schuurman et al.'s work on lone-actor terrorists' attack planning and preparation to assess the degree to which XRW lone actors (N=28) differ from the larger sample (N=57). [3, 29] In order to give readers a measure for gauging the reliability of a particular finding, the percentage of cases for which no data could be found is given in brackets after every variable. To underline the fact that we are dealing with a small sample size

when it comes to the pre-attack variables, percentages are given without decimal points.

Plot-relevant Background Characteristics

One of the main points to come out of earlier work on lone actors was that 46% (12% unknown) had a history of violent criminal behaviour. For the XRW lone actors surveyed here, this appears to be very similar at 50% (14% unknown). Whether a larger sample upholds this difference would be interesting to investigate, particularly given renewed recent interest in the so-called 'crime-terror nexus', which has so far been largely studied only in relation to jihadist terrorism.[30-32] For now, however, it is sufficient to note the high percentage of XRW lone actors with violent pasts. As previous engagement in criminal behaviour has been shown to be a potent predictor of similar delinquency in the future, this may be a particularly relevant aspect of threat assessment work for lone-actor terrorists in general.[33]

Social Context

It may seem counterintuitive to investigate the social aspects of lone-actor terrorists. Yet, previous research has demonstrated that, for a majority of lone actors, ties to radical, extremist or downright terrorist[34] individuals or groups are key elements in their adoption and maintenance of the motive, and sometimes also the means, to commit terrorist violence.[3, 6]

Again, while the small sample size precludes far-ranging generalizations, it is interesting to note that at 79% (7% unknown), XRW lone actors appear to be somewhat more likely to have such contacts than the larger sample from which they are drawn (63%, 9% unknown). Moreover, 54% (18% unknown) of XRW lone actors had contacts with leaders or authority figures within radical and extremist milieus, which is again higher than the 33% (16% unknown) found in the larger sample. But the biggest difference appears to be in the degree to which XRW lone actors have formal ties to radical, extremist or terrorist groups. At 50% (7% unknown), this appears to be clearly higher than the 32% (4% unknown) found in the larger sample. It would be particularly interesting for qualitative research to explore the effects of this stronger socialization in a radical, extremist or terrorist milieu. For now, these figures serve to underline the questionable assumptions about the isolation often thought to typify lone actors, and to illustrate the diversity in terms of embeddedness in radical social settings found within this category of terrorism.

Attack Planning

In terms of attack planning, understood here as the process of selecting suitable targets, no notable differences were found between the subsample of XRW lone actors and the 57 individuals in the total dataset. At 64% (18% unknown), a majority of XRW lone actors engage in at least some form of planning, very similar to the 70% (12% unknown) found in the larger sample. Similarly, 39% (32% unknown) of the XRW group engaged in target reconnaissance, just as 37% (28%) of the larger sample did.

Attack Preparation

Looking at the variables related to the acquisition of the means necessary to carry out an attack, the differences again appear to be small. Some 25% of XRW lone actors (4% unknown) had a history of (para-)military training, versus 16% (7% unknown) for the larger sample, which may translate into a slightly higher proficiency with the use of weapons among the former. The slightly greater prevalence of firearms training among XRW lone actors (43%, 29% unknown, versus 35% and 28% unknown for the entire sample), further emphasizes that these individuals may be characterized by a greater familiarity with the means to carry out acts of terrorist violence.

At 46% (7% unknown), the XRW subset was essentially just as interested in making homemade explosives as the 42% (4% unknown) found in the larger sample. This also extends to the acquisition of firearms, which 68% (4% unknown) of XRW lone actors and 61% (2% unknown) of the larger sample did. In other words, the higher incidence of weapons-related training may make XRW lone actors slightly more effective in the use of armed violence, but this difference does not appear to translate into very specific weapons' preferences.

Operational Security

One fascinating aspect of terrorists' pre-attack behaviours is their tendency to disregard operational security measures, or to execute them poorly, and their desire to share with others their convictions and sometimes also (hints of) their violent plans.[3, 35] Such 'leakage behaviour' in particular is striking, as it makes terrorists especially vulnerable to early detection and interdiction.[36] The desire to communicate an affiliation with a particular radical or extremist milieu, and to receive the benefits of status, a sense of belonging and fame (or infamy) often seem to outweigh the more practical dictates of maintaining a low profile prior to carrying out an attack. Operational security behaviour (or the lack thereof) and the tendency to 'leak' intent and capability for an attack are thus two of the most relevant categories of pre-attack behaviours for attempts to identify and prevent this form of violence. Because leakage behaviour has already been discussed in relation to the larger dataset above, this section focuses on operational-security relevant findings.

At 25% (21% unknown), XRW lone actors generally appear to be no more inclined to take operational security measures very seriously than the broader sample to which they are compared (26%, 18% unknown). One potential discrepancy may be that, at 39% (0% unknown), XRW lone actors appear to hide incriminating evidence such as weapons and explosives somewhat more often than the larger sample (26%, 0% unknown).

Another small potential operational-security related difference to emerge from this comparison, is that at 39% (11% unknown) XRW lone actors appears somewhat less likely to be known by the authorities on account of criminal (but not terrorist) antecedents than the larger sample (47%, 7% unknown). On the whole, however, this particular subtype of the lone-actor typology appears to display roughly the same vulnerabilities to detection and prevention through poor observance of operational security and a tendency towards leakage as lone actors overall.

Temporal Aspects of Pre-Attack Behaviours

The final comparison to be made looks at the temporal aspects of pre-attack behaviours. Because open-source data on how long various planning and preparatory activities took was often amongst the hardest to find, these findings are best seen as a first exploratory attempt to investigate this aspect of XRW lone-actors' behaviour. While keeping that in mind, Table 1 does hint at several interesting differences. XRW lone actors appear to become involved in radical, extremist or terrorist social milieus significantly earlier than their counterparts adhering to other extremist ideological currents. They also appear to start leaking both their convictions and their involvement in suspicious, that is violence-related, activities months and even years earlier than other lone actors. On the other hand, there seems to be no difference in terms of the length of the planning process and XRW lone actors may spend significantly shorter periods of time on attack preparation.

Table 1: Temporal Aspects of Pre-Attack Behaviours

Averages, time in months prior to attack/arrest	XRW (N=28)	Total sample (N=57)
Start contacts w. radical / extremist / terrorist individuals	90	72
Join radical / extremist / terrorist group	62	52
Development of intent to carry out an attack	34	30
Planning activities start	11	11
Preparation activities start	23	47
Operational security starts	23	15
Leakage of convictions starts	97	75
Leakage of involvement in suspicious activities starts	35	26

Discussion and Conclusion

The first part of the analysis compared XRW and other lone actors across a number of vulnerability, selection, motivation, capability and outcome indicators. Most of the significant differences were found in the vulnerability category. Those differences that emerged as significant characterized XWR actors as more likely to be a-religious thrill seekers born and raised in the country of attack, with a history of violence, compared to the OLAs who scored significantly higher on indicators related to religion (conversion, experiencing religious and ideological intensification, being Muslim, raised in religious household, born out of the country of attack). With regards to vectors of exposure to the terrorism-supportive ideology, indicators suggest that XRW actors were less likely to live alone at the time when they adopted their terrorism-supportive ideology, more likely to be involved in legal fundraising activities and to have consumed literature and propaganda related to lone actors. They also differed in their target choices: while OLAs were more likely to attack government targets and business locations, XRWs were more likely to go after private citizens and religious locations.

Perhaps more interesting than these findings, none of which appear to be that counterintuitive, is what our comparative analysis does not reveal: namely, we find no significant differences in terms of the vast majority of indicators, including all those related to motivation, capability, and, quite strikingly, in terms of leakage behaviours and warning signs. This raises the question to what extent risk assessment tools and processes must or should be tailored to ideology. Indeed, the Risk Analysis Framework used here is built on the notion that, while specificity and variability in indicators should be expected, due to social and self-selection effects, if nothing else, these and other underlying processes and mechanisms are common to all such events.[20] Whether more indicators and larger Ns would detect significant and meaningful differences between actor categories is an empirical question, but there are theoretical and empirical grounds to believe this is unlikely to be the case.[20, 37]

The second part of the article took a specific look at behaviours related to attack planning and preparation, using a second dataset encompassing 57 lone actors, of which 28 were classified as XRW. This provisional comparison also noted numerous similarities across categories; like lone-actor terrorists more generally, XRW lone actors appear to be typified by a high prevalence of violent criminal pasts, most of their attacks result from at least rudimentary planning and most of them appear to spend relatively little attention on operational security measures.

Yet there were also some differences that, while the small sample size must be kept in mind, point to potentially interesting divergences in terms of pre-attack behaviour that may also be of particular relevance for risk assessment purposes. On average, XRW lone actors seem to be slightly better trained in the use of weapons. This may make them more effective in the use of armed force and thus potentially more lethal. On the other hand, XRW lone actors also appear more likely to be involved with radical, extremist or even distinctly terrorist individuals and groups. While their higher likeliness of being (peripherally) embedded in such radical milieus could boost their capabilities by exposing them to a larger number of like-minded individuals who may have skills or experience relevant to conducting acts of terrorism, these social ties also undercut their ability to remain anonymous. A third differentiation was found in the length of the planning and preparatory process, with XRW generally starting months and even years earlier with becoming involved in radical milieus and engaging in leakage behaviour.

What all of these findings underline is that, like lone actors in general, the XRW lone actor is not a completely isolated individual liable to strike out of the blue. Their social ties to like-minded individuals and groups, the limited attention paid to operational security measures, the tendency to leak both convictions and violent intent, and the fact that many of these processes occur over a period of months, if not years, prior to the (planned) attack, means that early-detection and prevention of this threat is distinctly possible. Hopefully, the results presented in this article will be able to contribute to the more effective pre-emption of lone-actor terrorism, whether extreme right-wing in ideological orientation or otherwise.

Acknowledgment

This material is based upon work supported by a European Commission 7th Framework Programme Grant, No. 608354 (PRIME) FP7-SEC-2013-1. More information is available from <http://www.fp7-prime.eu/>.

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Terrorist Target Selection: The Case of Anders Behring Breivik

by Cato Hemmingby and Tore Bjørgo

Abstract

The 22 July 2011 attacks in Norway offers a rare opportunity to study in detail the factors and circumstances which influenced the decision-making of the lone actor terrorist and the target selection process in particular. The terrorist had more than 65 potential targets that were on his mind, but he included only a third of these in concrete plans, before he ended up attacking only two. Which factors made him dismiss some targets to the benefit of others, and at what time in the selection process did crucial decision-making sequences take place? What were the alternatives he considered? The study will analyse the dynamic interaction between four main components: Ideology defines the overall objectives and the enemy picture, as well as the reasoning and moral reflections that constitute the basic fundament of the actor's rationality. Strategy is the long-term plan for how the overarching objectives are to be achieved. Furthermore, the decision-making is also influenced by internal factors possessed by the terrorist actor, such as manpower, skills, funding, weapons, psychological make-up, and external factors outside the terrorist's control, such as counterterrorism efforts, local environment, gun control laws or unexpected events.

Keywords: Terrorist targets, decision-making, modus operandi, lone actor

Introduction

Right-wing terrorist Anders Behring Breivik conducted two extremely brutal attacks on 22 July 2011 in Norway. He first detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in the centre of the Government District in downtown Oslo, which he followed up with a shooting attack at the small island Utøya, where the Labour Party's youth wing (AUF, Worker's Youth League) held its annual summer camp. Eight persons were killed in Oslo, while 69 people lost their lives at Utøya, making Breivik the most deadly solo terrorist in Europe thus far.

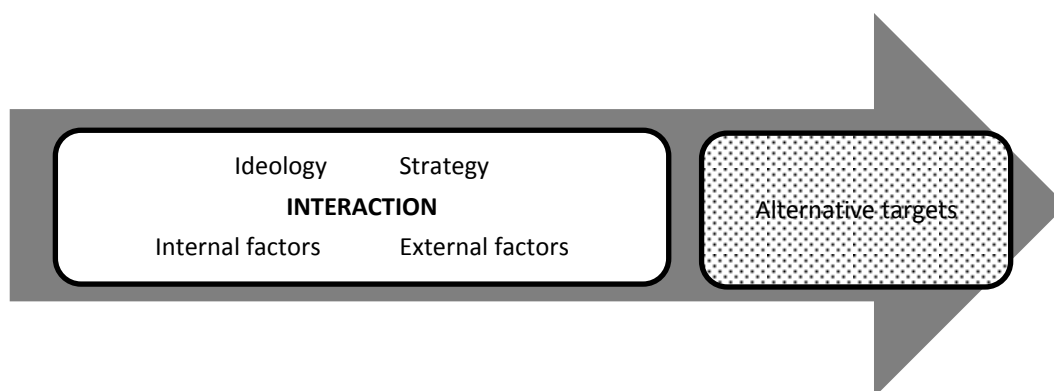
Most of the research and general literature following the 22 July attacks in Norway focused on the background of the perpetrator and his radicalisation process.[1] The objective of this article has been to map the operational aspects of this case, with an emphasis on the target selection process. How and why did Breivik end up with the final targets he attacked, and what were the alternatives? Also, which factors made him dismiss the targets not attacked, and at what time in the target selection process did crucial decision-making sequences take place? In most terrorist plots such questions are unlikely to be ever answered due to lack of information. For the present article, the amount and quality of the information available offered a unique opportunity to analyse a target selection process on the individual level. Such opportunities do not come often, and accordingly the authors believe this research represents an original contribution to existing research on modus operandi, pre-attack behaviour and lone actor terrorism.[2]

Regarding primary sources for this research, the General Attorney granted the authors unlimited access to all the protocolled transcripts from the police investigative interviews, as well as video recordings from the most interesting sequences. Moreover, the news agency NTB provided the authors with accurate word-for-word transcripts from the trial. Various court documents have also made an important contribution to this research. In addition, the perpetrator's compendium titled *2083 – A European Declaration of Independence* was consulted. It was a theoretical product, established to present Breivik's ideological narrative and to provide others with practical advice.[3] Although the compendium has value for understanding Breivik's ideology and mindset, it has only limited relevance when looking into his planning and decision-making for the 22 July attacks. Additionally, the terrorist's narcissistic personality and his eagerness to be seen as an extraordinarily capable terrorist have been given careful attention during our work. By triangulating information from different primary sources, the risk of stepping into potential pitfalls has been minimised.

The Journey from Target Browsing to Attack

A target selection process begins when the terrorist actor in question takes a decision to actually launch a terrorist attack, and it culminates with the attack, or attempt of such, on the final target(s). Between the start and the end of this journey there are multiple variables affecting the target selection, and these have to be identified and sorted systematically for further qualitative analysis. Scholars with an interest in *modus operandi* questions will know C.J.M. Drake's work and his comprehensive approach regarding targeting.[4] This research uses a similar approach, but with a slightly different structure and a more inter-active framework with more focus on the dynamics and non-linear development of events, in contrast to Drake's funnel-like, linear typologies.[5]

On the graph's upper level, the terrorists' *ideology* and *strategy* represent the major framework they operate within. In fact, this may be all we know about actors in an early phase of their existence. More concretely, ideological perspectives supply us with the overall objectives and the enemy picture, as well as the reasoning and moral reflections that constitute the basic fundament of the actor's rationality. Strategy is basically the long-term plan for *how* the overarching objectives are to be achieved.[6] Large organizations may use different strategies in order to achieve specific objectives, but most terrorist cells and lone actors are likely to operate following simpler and straightforward strategies. For example, they might consider one-offs versus a series of attacks, whether to attack indiscriminately or discriminately, or choose between mass casualties or limited casualties.



Moving to the lower level of the model, there are numerous variables linked to the terrorists' capacity and scope of operational activity. Here the *internal factors* are those possessed or controlled by the terrorists themselves which influence their capacity, like manpower, skills, funding, weapons and intelligence-gathering ability. The psychological dimension – on the individual level, as well as intragroup dynamics – is also important. Personality disorders are not unusual, and this may affect targeting decisions too.[7] Then there are *external factors* the terrorists have to take into account, like counterterrorism efforts, local environment, gun control laws and security efforts protecting attractive targets. Finally, one should not forget that pure coincidences, serendipity and bad luck might enter the scene unexpectedly at any time during a terrorist operation – right until the very last moment before a target is struck. It can be that a special window of opportunity suddenly appears, or that a terrorist with qualms regarding indiscriminate killings and mass-casualties is forced to abort an attack already under way if “innocent” civilians suddenly turn up. Since the four categories of independent variables affect each other in a highly dynamic process, *interaction* is a keyword. But identifying and sorting variables involved will rarely explain the full dynamics seen or the decision-making process. Here, in-depth qualitative analysis has to be applied, and for this research case study the method of process-tracing has been applied.[8]

As described, all terrorists will act within some kind of framework, affected by a number of constraints. Ideally a target should be in accordance with all kinds of preferences the actor may have, but that is probably rarely the case. As problems surface, it is more likely that a change of priorities, compromises and pragmatism enter the arena. Important to remember, however, terrorists will most often have a number of potential targets to choose from as the targeting planning process is about to be concluded – and especially those with few moral qualms.

Therefore, minor details and situational circumstances may prove decisive in the final decision-making phase.

The Dataset

In targeting research, targets *not* chosen for attack are just as interesting as the targets hit. We have therefore mapped all persons, institutions and organizations Breivik expressed a distinct hostility towards during the police investigative interviews and the trial. Of the 65 potential targets we identified, 44 of them were never part of any concrete plans Breivik considered. Nine of them were totally unrealistic, beyond Breivik's capacity, or not in accordance with his priorities.[9] As for the remaining 35, these were within the terrorist's capacity, but apparently not important enough to qualify for direct targeting. With a few exceptions these targets were not highly symbolic, and Breivik probably did not see the potential for a spectacular shock-attack with most of them. Another factor coming into play was that Breivik decided to concentrate on one political party only, namely the Labour Party. Following this, politicians from other parties were excluded as targets.[10]

Moving on to the 21 individuals and institutions that were part of Breivik's different plans, there is one important observation. Breivik would not initiate an attack against a single individual only, as that would not be grand enough.[11] Accordingly, the five individuals seen in concrete plans were regarded as "bonuses" in specific attack scenarios. Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and Minister of Justice and Police, Knut Storberget, could have become victims in the Government District explosion, if they had been present at the time of detonation. Likewise, journalist Marte Michelet, Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and former Prime Minister Go Harlem Brundtland could have become "bonus" targets at Utøya.[12] This means there were 16 potential main targets Breivik concentrated on, namely the Government District, the Royal Palace, Oslo City Hall, the Parliament, the Parliament District, the Directorate of Immigration, the Labour Party building, the office of the Socialist Left Party, the SKUP investigative journalism conference, the Labour Party's annual convention, the Labour Party Youth Camp at Utøya, Blitz Anarchist house, the newspapers VG, Dagsavisen and Aftenposten, as well as the Norwegian broadcasting company NRK. Looking at the characteristics of these targets, Breivik's main focus was on authorities and news media in particular, including a few time-fixed events.

The Concrete Plans

In order to explain the dynamics of Breivik's targeting process and how he ended up with the Government District and the Labour Party Youth Camp at Utøya as his final targets of choice, a more in-depth look into his concrete plans and operational proceedings is called for.

What seems to have been a rather complex main plan in an early phase involved three vehicle-born IEDs against different targets, followed by three shooting attacks against other targets.[13] With reference to the 16 possible targets Breivik considered in concrete plans, the decision-making was partly simple, and partly complicated. The simple part was that H-building in the Government District, housing the Prime Minister's Office in the top floors and the Ministry of Justice and Police from 12th floor and below, always was bomb target number one. This iconic building, symbolising the Labour Party-led coalition government that Breivik held accountable for the alleged Cultural Marxist take-over in the Norwegian society, was more or less a perfect target. The Labour party HQ, located just a couple of hundred meters from the Government District was the clear bomb target number two.

In contrast to target one and two, Breivik had substantial difficulties deciding on bomb target three. He considered several buildings in the capital for this, namely the Parliament building, the Parliament district, the City Hall, the newspaper Aftenposten's building, the Directorate of Immigration and the Royal Palace, but most of them did not fit the bill.[14] The Directorate of Immigration was probably not high-symbolic enough, since it was a rather non-descript building in a busy neighbourhood. The potential for unacceptable "civilian losses" excluded the newspaper *Aftenposten*, which only occupied a small part of the tall building. The City Hall, on the other hand, was difficult since it was housing the conservative-led Oslo municipality

administration.[15] The potential for a high number of random casualties was also a factor with regard to the iconic Parliament building; in addition, Breivik was unsure how to get the vehicle into a good tactical position. As for the Parliament District, this stands out as a rather unattractive alternative with regard to symbolism, and also here the perpetrator would have little control over random casualties. On the other side, the Royal Palace attracted the terrorist's attention. It is an iconic building overlooking the Karl Johan high street, and it is located at a satisfactory distance from other buildings and crowded areas. Breivik also stated that it was an attractive factor that a blown-up palace would be observed from the normally very crowded Karl Johan High street.[16] Additionally, the drive-through entrance in the middle of the palace was perfect for positioning a bomb vehicle. Breivik ended up with the Royal Palace as his third bomb target, but with an almost ironic prerequisite, namely that the royal family should not be present at the time of the detonation, because he considered himself to be a monarchist.[17] The bomb attack should simply be a warning to the royal family due to their immigrant-friendly attitude.[18]

After placing the last bomb vehicle at the Royal Palace, Breivik in one scenario planned to go to the Blitz Anarchist house and shoot dead as many as possible, before moving on to the Dagsavisen newspaper, and finally the Socialist Left Party's headquarter. All of these objects were located relatively close to each other, and it is likely that this influenced Breivik's decision-making process. One shooting target discarded was the Norwegian broadcasting company NRK building. Its location, and Breivik's lack of knowledge about the structure inside, led to its elimination from the targeting short list.[19] In general, the most important part for Breivik was the bomb attacks – the shooting attacks came second.[20]

At one point, Breivik dropped the idea of conducting three shooting attacks. Instead, he opted for a modified main plan, combining the three car bomb attacks, with one small arms attack.[21] The targets for the bombs were the same, but the three previous potential targets for a firearm attack were all dropped, in favour for the SKUP conference in Tønsberg, about 100km away from Oslo.[22] SKUP is an annual prize conference for investigative journalism and the event was due early in April 2011. If he was not ready by that time, he had an alternative shooting attack target—the annual Labour Party convention, scheduled for about a week later. [23] This backup target was in accordance with his compendium, where he specifically mentions the annual meetings of the socialist/social democrat parties in Europe as prioritised targets.[24] A closer examination of Breivik's operational proceedings explains how and why Breivik's modified main assault plan was also to change.

From Thinking to Acting

Breivik's personal background is not as relevant for his *modus operandi* as it might be for his radicalization process, but one factor regarding his finances should be mentioned. The terrorist had earned about 420,000 GBP (our conversion from NOK) by selling false university documents from 2002 to 2006.[25] When he moved back in with his mother in 2006, Breivik claimed he had about somewhere between 56,000 and 68,000 GBP in the bank, and 34,000 GBP in cash. In addition, in the autumn of 2009 he managed to obtain ten credit cards, which provided him with an extra 26,700 GBP.[26] With a sound financial situation and no job constraints, Breivik could devote himself totally to the operation.

Regarding the time for deciding on a terrorist attack, the court concluded that Breivik had been strongly goal-oriented since 2006.[27] Breivik himself claims to have started the work with his compendium around 2006-2007.[28] It is therefore likely that from around this moment in time Breivik was what psychiatrist Randi Rosenqvist at Ila Prison and Detention Centre described as *a man with a mission*. [29]

The first documented evidence of practical preparations for the attacks dates back to May 2009, when Breivik registered the agricultural company *Breivik Geofarm*. This provided him with a cover for renting a farm, and enabled him to buy fertilizer and other components necessary for bomb-making. From then on he made other practical preparations too. He gathered more than 8,000 email addresses by using two Facebook accounts, for the forthcoming distribution of his compendium.[30] He legally bought a Mini-Ruger rifle in November 2010,

and a Glock pistol in March 2011 – allegedly for hunting and sports shooting purposes.[31] Moreover, he bought weapons parts, clothing and other equipment he needed. In the summer of 2010, he also went to Prague and purchased Norwegian police insignia from a local print shop.[32]

Regarding finding a farm, Breivik started on this during autumn 2010, but it proved to be difficult.[33] As time went by he approached several landlords at the same time. On 29 March 2011, a lessor in Sunnmøre (more than 500 km from Oslo) initiated an email dialogue with Breivik, in response to the latter's Internet advertisement on an agricultural site. Breivik ended the correspondence days later, however, when he became aware that it was an eco farm – realizing that cow manure is useless for making improvised explosives.[34] On 6 April 2011, Breivik could finally put his signature on a contract, renting the farm Vålstua about 200 kilometres north-east of Oslo, from May onwards. By that time, both his alternative time-fixed shooting attack targets were passed, so now the Labour Party's Youth Camp at Utøya surfaced as the most attractive target for a shooting spree.[35]

Breivik regarded Utøya as a perfect target. He estimated that there would be 700 participants in a limited area, surrounded by cold water, 550 meters away to the closest shore.[36] He had been keeping Utøya in mind for about a year as an alternative target.[37] In court he stated that *"my goal was to kill 600 people"* – first and foremost by shooting and chasing the panicking youngsters out in the cold water and making them drown.[38] He also hoped to decapitate members of a top category "Cultural Marxist" (exactly who that description applied to would depend on the day of the attack). Journalist Marte Michelet was to visit Wednesday, Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre was due Thursday, and former Prime minister Brundtland had been invited for Friday. Breivik wanted to videotape the whole decapitation sequence and put it on the Internet.[39]

At this point it is worth noting that the terrorist, with Utøya as a target, had become pragmatic. According to his own theoretical target classification system, with A, B, C and D traitors, category C traitors (which the participants at Utøya were) should not be given death punishment.[40] Pushed on this fact during the trial, Breivik explained that the guidelines in the manifesto were to be followed as far as possible, but that adjustments could be made if it was not possible to reach the primary target categories.[41] He also rationalized his targeting by claiming that most of the youths were political leaders. This was hardly the case, and Breivik's explanation was a weak attempt of post-attack rationalization.[42] Another interesting point is that Breivik chose to do the attack on Utøya, even though he himself believed that this attack would be seen as illegitimate by 50% of his fellow ultra-nationalists— in contrast to the bomb attack in downtown Oslo for which he expected 100% backing from his main reference group.[43] Breivik stated that his actions might not be understood until decades later, when the situation between the Europeans and the Muslims had deteriorated even further.

When it comes to information gathering and reconnaissance, Breivik based his activity on the media, on-line sources, and physical hostile reconnaissance. The amount and quality of this activity was, however, limited.[44] One constraint for the terrorist was the fear of being detected by the national police security service due to online activity. He was very careful using his computer for information gathering, he masked his IP address when visiting far-right forums, and he consciously moderated his extreme views when in discussions with others.[45] He was equally afraid of detection when he was outdoors looking at buildings he considered for targeting, believing that even a short glance at CCTV cameras would "flag" him.[46] He did have a point, however, when stating that details were not always important, as long as he was able to drive the vehicle to the entrance of the building he wanted to bomb.[47] Breivik acted cautiously as he bought weapon accessories, protection gear, and items linked to bomb production. On a few occasions, however, he was forced to accept some risk, e.g. when he bought sodium nitrate from a pharmacy, as well as when he acquired the powder fuse and 150 kg aluminium powder from Poland.[48] A practical constraint for the terrorist was his class B driver's license, which limited him to vehicles with a maximum load weight of 1,200 kg. While this did not impact the target selection, it did limit the size and weight of the planned home-made bombs.[49]

Too Little, Too Late – Towards the Final Plan

Settled at his rented farm, Breivik estimated that it would take him four weeks to make the three bombs needed

for his main plan. It turned out to take three times as long just to make one.[50] The Norwegian fertilizer manufacturers' efforts to make fertilizers with high nitrogen content less suitable for bomb making caused him trouble – and cost him time.[51] Breivik was also running out of money. His bank accounts were empty by 26 April and he had to start using his credit cards.[52] Breivik now became concerned about being listed with payment problems, which could cause him trouble, when trying to rent the two vehicles necessary for his operation. He was also aware that the street leading to the H-building was to be permanently closed for security reasons after years of bureaucratic and political delays.[53] Earlier on, he had also been worried that a jihadi cell arrested in Oslo in late 2010, would push the date for closing the street forward.[54] Finally, his choice of Utøya as a shooting attack target – a time-fixed event – added to the pressure.

As Breivik worked on his explosives, he must have realized that the timing of his planned attack on the Government District got worse week by week, since the offices are quite empty during the holiday season. By the end of June, Breivik also realized he had to carry out the attack with just one bomb, and from then on his focus was solely on a bomb attack against the Government District and the shooting attack at Utøya.[55] This narrowed the window of opportunity to the month of July 2011.[56]

The Day of the Attacks

On the evening of 20 July, Breivik drove his rented Volkswagen Crafter, loaded with the improvised explosive device (IED) to Oslo. He parked it a short walk away from his mother's flat, and worried that foul smells from the bomb might raise suspicions of people in the area. Thus, he placed a note on the driver's seat explaining that the car was in the business of sewer- and drain-cleaning. He thought this would minimize the chances for someone to report complaints or becoming suspicious.[57] Breivik slept over at his mother's place and took a train back to Rena the following morning. At the farm he prepared the detonator part for transport, as he wanted to take this separately from the booster charge to Oslo.[58] At 8.40pm on the same day, Breivik drove the Fiat Doblo to Oslo. He arrived about 11.30 p.m. and parked it right behind the Crafter, before walking to his mother's apartment.[59]

Next morning, on the day of the attacks, Breivik was delayed. He was exhausted by the night of 21 July and woke up a bit late. He then experienced technical problems with the preparations for uploading a propaganda movie on YouTube, meant to put the terrorist attacks in an ideological context. He got delayed and then had to drive his escape car in position. He did this around noon, before returning to his mother's flat by taxi. Putting his ideological compendium online took more time than he had estimated, consequently leading to further delays, and this reduced the success potential for his operation.[60] Originally he had planned to detonate the charge in the Government District at 10 a.m.[61] His delays changed targeting aspects of the operation in two ways. Firstly, he initiated the attack in the Government District at a time when many government employees had left work early. Secondly, he knew already in the flat the same morning that he had no chance of getting out to Utøya in time for catching former PM Gro Harlem Brundtland.

Breivik drove to the Government District just before 3 p.m. He parked his van in front of the main entrance to the H-building at 3:17 p.m., lit the fuse, stepped out of the vehicle and locked the doors. Then, in his fake police uniform and with the Glock pistol in his hand, he started walking towards his escape car at Hammersborg Torg square nearby. The bomb detonated at 3:25 p.m. Breivik was by then already on his way to Utøya, listening to the radio for news related to the bomb attack. He reached the landside of Utøya around 4:30 p.m., and took a break near the ferry terminal, in order to adjust both clothing and equipment. He wanted a lighter outfit in order to improve his mobility. About 5 p.m. he drove down to the pier, and managed to convince those present that he was a police officer who had been tasked to secure the camp after the attack in Oslo. Those present accepted his explanation. The ferry was called for and shortly after the terrorist was on his way to part two of his operation.

Breivik initiated the shooting attack on the island immediately after getting off the ferry, at 5:21 p.m. He first shot the off-duty police officer responsible for security and the female chief camp administrator. Then he started

the systematic hunt for Labour Party youths all over the small island, killing many from a very close distance. He also managed to lure many youths out of their hiding, with his fake police uniform and assurances that he had come to save them. As he moved around on the island he kept himself out of sight from the landside, in case police snipers came to the scene. He was also careful when moving around in buildings, avoiding small and narrow rooms, because he could be vulnerable for counterattacks. The terrorist kept on murdering for a long time, but when the National Response Police Unit arrived on the island 6:30 p.m., Breivik gave himself up without any resistance just four minutes later. By then, Breivik had killed 69 people on the island.[62] Adding the victims who died from the bombing in the Government District, the total number of killed were 77 – a number affecting the annual terrorism statistics in Europe significantly.

A Personalized and Customized Ideology

If we return to the comprehensive model used for sorting the variables which impacted on Breivik's targeting process, beginning with the ideological factors, he had, like many other right-wing extremists, a double enemy image.[63] The external enemy were Muslims, and especially immigrants and refugees. The inner enemy (*the traitors*) were those responsible for the development, typically authorities, political leftists, journalists, and the cultural elite – what Breivik interchangeably called *Cultural Marxists*, *Multiculturalists* and the *Marxist/Multicultural Alliance*. [64] Breivik chose to attack the inner enemy, namely the Labour party and the so-called Cultural Marxists. He did initially consider attacking the external enemy, but decided against this, remembering the murder of Benjamin Hermansen in Oslo in 2001.[65] The 15 year old, with a mother from Norway and father from Ghana, was killed by neo-Nazis, and the massive public condemnation following this killing, convinced Breivik that such an action was likely to be counter-productive for the movement.[66]

Breivik's personality and narcissistic nature was a driver for his spectacular shock attack strategy, and his general lack of empathy enabled him to conduct his barbaric actions. Breivik made it clear in his compendium that women had to be killed alongside men.[67] On the other side, he did not want to be considered a child killer, although 33 of those killed at Utøya were under the age of 18 – with two as young as 14.[68] Breivik said he assumed everybody had to be at least age 16 in order to participate at Utøya, and that he expected to confront people with an average age of 22-23 years.[69] The fact that he actually spared a 9 year-old boy on Utøya did not alter that fact significantly.[70] Breivik seemed unprepared for the quick decision-making situations he found himself in on the island, and in court he admitted it was difficult.[71]

With regard to the degree of discrimination and the civilian loss factor, Breivik favoured selective targeting, but opted for a mass casualty focus as far as his enemies were concerned. This means a wide scope of target alternatives, in reality only exceeded by those terrorist actors practicing totally indiscriminate attacks with mass casualty potential. Breivik stated that as much as 50% civilian losses would be acceptable, and that less than 10% would be optimal.[72] It is nevertheless a fact that the civilian loss factor turned out to be a constraint for him on many target objects, which should come as no surprise for a terrorist planning to operate in an urban area with 1,000 kg fertilizer bombs without any pre-warnings.

The Strategy of a Massive Shock Attack

In court, Breivik gave four motives for the terrorist attacks.[73] These were to bring attention to the cause, distribution of the online compendium, to hold accountable those who were responsible for promoting multiculturalism in Norway, and to launch a provocation leading to a persecution of the moderate cultural conservatives and their radicalisation. The nature of these objectives is typical for terrorists; in terms of strategy these can be linked to *advertisement*, *compliance*, *endorsement* and *provocation*. [74] Breivik saw the struggle from a long-term perspective, namely in the light of a forthcoming, ultranationalist struggle in Europe. He assumed that his actions would be condemned today, but understood and supported at a later stage of the conflict.[75]

Breivik's main strategic objective was to conduct a devastating shock-attack.[76] It had to be brutal and devastating, and only a *spectacular* (attack) would do. Breivik's grand inspiration with his bomb attack against the Government District came from the first attack on the World Trade Centre in New York in 1993, and Timothy McVeigh's bombing of a government building in Oklahoma in 1995.[77] Breivik was of the opinion that a single, brutal mass-casualty operation would produce more fear than a series of small-scale attacks. A prerequisite for this, however, was that the authorities and the public believe that there would be more terrorists out there, ready to strike, since it was the expectation of more violence that would bring about the behaviour he expected.[78] This is probably why Breivik immediately following his capture claimed that there were two other cells ready to launch attacks. Additionally, an overwhelmingly brutal operation would ensure a global media coverage.

Breivik also found that working as a one-man cell gave the best chance of success. In court he recalled how the white supremacy-group *The Order* had been crushed by law enforcement agencies in the mid-1980s.[79] Breivik therefore never even tried to involve others as he started planning his actions. Through the whole operational phase he made a point of avoiding any overt or traceable contact with domestic militant nationalists, due to the risk of being detected – accepting that this self-imposed restriction would reduce his operational capacity. In his compendium he drew lines between the number of perpetrators, labour, time required to complete the operation and risk of detection.[80]

Breivik's Operational Capacity

Nothing in Breivik's personal background makes him a particularly resourceful and capable solo terrorist. He is not extraordinarily intelligent. He does not have any technical education or skills of value, and he never did compulsory military service – which he later regretted.[81] Breivik had limited experience with the use of firearms, and no previous knowledge of explosives.[82] What then enabled him to pull off a complex terrorist operation? Breivik's personality has already been mentioned, but his ability to stay focused and motivated over a long period of time was remarkable. His personality disorder and lack of empathy boosted his ability to execute brutal and cold-blooded acts. On the practical side, Breivik did a thorough job on the bomb production. Although he had practically no understanding of how explosives work after detonation, the bomb construction was solid enough. Furthermore, his extreme security consciousness enabled him to avoid detection during the long phase of planning, preparation and execution. Even though his close surroundings did note extremist statements on some occasions, Breivik never disclosed his plans.[83] Additionally, his financial situation was initially very strong and without a job he had time to fully devote himself to preparing a terrorist operation. As to his ability in terms of planning and operationalization, we found a more complex picture, taking into account that he was sophisticated in some areas, and surprisingly superficial in other areas.

The External Factors

The capacity of the perpetrator must be seen against the background of a societal context. Until the 22 July 2011 attacks, the Norwegian society had been blessed with an absence of major terrorist incidents. Accordingly, there had not been any significant reforms or a substantial focus on societal security issues with regard to thwarting terrorism. In fact, the planned street closure of Grubbegata in the Government District illustrated how the municipality, business interests, neighbours and the media refused to recognize the need for a very basic protective security measure – and all this in combination with a passive government leadership with regard to the realization of it. An editorial in the leading Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* with the headline “Hypothetical and hysterical,” slammed and ridiculed the proposed street closure more than four years before Breivik struck.[84] As such, it is no exaggeration to say that the degree of openness in the Norwegian society was significant before the Breivik attacks, and the security efforts around highly symbolic state buildings were limited. Notably, the national police security service had also been affected by historical developments. A few, small-scale incidents with far-right extremists for the last decades had by 2011 been overshadowed by the

growing threat from militant Islamists. Breivik was on the outside of the threat picture in Norway in 2011.[85] On the practical side, Breivik had the advantage of operating on his home ground. Furthermore, the weapons regulations at the time made it relatively easy for Breivik to obtain firearms legally.

Conclusion

Anders Behring Breivik was not a typical solo terrorist or lone actor profile. His shock attack strategy, mass-casualty focus, operational security consciousness, and the remorseless acts he carried out at Utøya were beyond what most lone actor terrorists would consider doing on their own. His megalomaniac personality influenced several of these factors, but if we leave out the aberrant characteristics and skills of Breivik, he was quite average in some other ways. His general background, his radicalization process and his ideological foundation were not unusual. Moreover, he was not without flaws when he planned or conducted his terrorist operation. He significantly miscalculated the time needed to find a farm, and he only managed to make one bomb, instead of three as originally planned. Furthermore, he made several basic mistakes during the operation. One example is related to the fact that he planned to set fire to the houses at Utøya, but he had brought with him 8 litres of diesel instead of gasoline, which would have been easier to ignite – and he had lost his lighter.[86]

Overall, this research has shown that even a seemingly ruthless terrorist like Breivik was affected by an overarching framework and a number of constraints – also influencing his target selection process. A high number of variables linked to ideology, strategy, internal factors and external factors – including unexpected constraints and pure coincidences – were involved, and the process became profoundly dynamic. Breivik experienced that targeting processes are not linear and fully controllable. This frustrated the Norwegian terrorist, who stated that he probably had to change his plans about 20-30 times.[87] He also became pragmatic when he chose the event at Utøya as a target.

The Labour Party and the media represented the most attractive targets for Breivik, but in the end no media targets were actually attacked. This demonstrates that the interaction between different constraints derailed Breivik from his stated partial goal of striking the Norwegian press, leading him to hit the Labour party-led coalition government and the party's youth organization only. Also, Breivik's bomb attacks against iconic targets had a higher priority than the shooting attack. It is therefore a matter of tragic irony that the shooting attack at Utøya outbided Breivik's number one priority – the Government District – with regard to the death tolls. This also demonstrates that extensive shock attacks can be conducted just as effectively with small arms as with large bombs.

Finally, many of the circumstances and factors that influenced Breivik's decision-making and latitude, such as time, capacity and funding, are generic to all terrorists. In this study it has been interesting to note how information availability and concrete security measures (or the lack thereof) affected Breivik. A lack of information and insight made both the parliament and the national broadcaster NRK less attractive targets for him. In general, security precautions at potential target objects force perpetrators to collect more information and conduct thorough hostile reconnaissance, enhancing the possibility for detection. An even though target substitution always will be a factor, the next alternative targets may possibly lead to a less damaging and lethal outcome.

The Need for More Research

Modus operandi, terrorist decision-making and target selection are complex matters, and even though there is an increasing amount of research into this area, more research is called for. Here we will limit ourselves to two issues that deserve more attention. The first issue concerns the concrete decision-making processes of those planning and conducting terrorist attacks. This study of Anders Behring Breivik has shown that this research can be done in reasonable detail with extensive materials at hand, but this covers only one case and one individual. More in-depth single case studies will therefore contribute to an increased understanding

regarding terrorist decision-making related to targeting in general.

Another issue is hostile reconnaissance activity. To what degree do terrorists gather information about potential targets during their planning process, online and/or through physical reconnaissance? Breivik was surprisingly superficial in some areas related to information gathering and reconnaissance, but in several cases related to militant Islamists, a substantial amount of web-based target browsing and extensive preparations have been noted.[88] Learning more about how terrorists conduct information gathering and hostile reconnaissance, will provide valuable knowledge with regard to how security measures affect them, how potential perpetrators are effectively deterred, how they can be detected on site while conducting hostile reconnaissance, as well as how their information gathering abilities can be reduced. Better knowledge in these areas is more or less a prerequisite for taking protective security a step further.

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Additional Resources on Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism

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Conference Monitor/Calendar of Events

Compiled by Reinier Bergema

The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), in its mission to provide a platform for academics and practitioners in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism, compiles an online calendar, listing recent and upcoming academic and professional conferences, symposia and similar events that are directly or indirectly relevant to the readers of *Perspectives on Terrorism*. The calendar includes academic and (inter-) governmental conferences, professional expert meetings, civil society events and educational programs. The listed events are organised by a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental institutions, including several key [\(counter\) terrorism research centres and institutes](#).

We encourage readers to contact the journal's Assistant Editor for Conference Monitoring, Reinier Bergema, and provide him with relevant information, preferably in the same format as the items listed below. He can be reached at <reinierbergema@hcss.nl> or via Twitter: [@reinierbergema](#).

December 2018

Online Counterterrorism: The Role of the Public and Private Sectors

Chatham House & Women in International Security UK (WIIS UK)

3 December, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ChathamHouse](#) & [@WIISUK](#)

International Congress on Big Data, Deep Learning and Fighting Cyber Terrorism

Gazi University and ICT Authority of Turkey (BTK)

3-4 December, Ankara, Turkey

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@Gazi_University](#)

America and the Middle East Since 9/11

Chatham House

4 December, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ChathamHouse](#)

Counter Terror Asia Expo 2018

Counter-Terror Asia Conference (CTAC)

4-5 December, Singapore, Singapore

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: *n/a*

Book Launch: Rules for Rebels: The Science of Victory in Militant History

Center for Strategic & International Studies

5 December, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@csis](#)

Modern Political Warfare

International Institute for Strategic Studies

5 December, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@IISS_org](#)

The Killing of Khashoggi and the Future of U.S.-Saudi Relations – An evening with Barnett Rubin

NYU Reiss Center on Law and Security

5 December, New York, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RCLS_NYU](#)

Next steps for Scholarship on Gender and the Far-Right

University of Oslo Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX)

5 December, Oslo, Norway

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@CrexUiO](#)

Security Research Event 2018: Making Europe a Safer Place: Demonstrating the Impact of EU-Funded Security Research

European Commission (EC) & Austrian Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology

5-6 December, Brussels, Belgium

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@EU_Commission](#)

Europe And Its Neighbourhood: Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management in the 21st Century

International Crisis Group

6 December, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@CrisisGroup](#)

Targeting the De-materialised “Caliphate”: Extremism, Radicalisation and Illegal Trafficking.

NATO Defense College Foundation

6 December, Rome, Italy

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@NATOFoundation](#)

Methods for Evidence-Based Approaches to Prevention Activities and Countering Violent Extremism within the Social and Health Domain

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) H&SC

6-7 December, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RANEurope](#)

TARTIS Seminar Series on Political Violence: Stephen Tinkel

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

7 December, New York, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@JohnJayCollege](#)

Tech Against Terrorism & GIFCT: Berlin Launch

Tech Against Terrorism & Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT)

7 December, Berlin, Germany

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@techvsterrorism](#)

Saudi Arabia’s War in Yemen

CATO Institute

7 December, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@catoinstitute](#)

Tunisia’s Foreign Fighters

The Washington Institute

10 December, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@washinstitute](#)

International Security, Stakes and Perspectives: Mali

Royal Netherlands Society for Military Art and Science (KVBK) & the Netherlands Atlantic Association

10 December, The Hague, the Netherlands

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@JongeAtlantici](#)

Bridging the Data-Policy Gap on Counterterrorism

United States Institute of Peace

10 December, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@USIP](#)

Launch of the Global Terrorism Index 2018: Global Trends in Terrorism

The Institute of International & European Affairs

10 December, Brussels, Belgium

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@iiea](#)

Preventing Revictimisation

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) RVT

10-11 December, Manchester, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RANEurope](#)

A National Security Crisis

The Heritage Foundation

11 December, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@heritage](#)

After the Caliphate: The Islamic State and the Future Terrorist Diaspora

International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague

11 December, The Hague, the Netherlands

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ICCT_TheHague](#)

Jamestown's 12th Annual Terrorism Conference

Jamestown Foundation

12 December, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@JamestownTweets](#)

Planning to Fail: The US Wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan

Swedish Defense University

12 December, Stockholm, Sweden

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@Forsvarshogsk](#)

Research Seminar: A Genealogy of Modern Wars

Swedish Defense University

12 December, Stockholm, Sweden

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@Forsvarshogsk](#)

Weapon Supplies into South Sudan's Civil War

Chatham House

12 December, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ChathamHouse](#)

Preventing Terrorism Through Risk Assessment – A UK Perspective

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

12 December, Oslo, Norway

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@nupinytt](#)

The Humanitarian and National Security Crisis in Yemen: An Update and Path Forward

Center for Strategic & International Studies

13 December, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@csis](#)

Small Wars, Big Data: The Information Revolution in Modern Conflict

Center for Strategic & International Studies

13 December, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@csis](#)

Lebanon: A Vision for the Future

Chatham House

13 December, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ChathamHouse](#)

Fragility, Conflict, and Climate Change in Mali and Sahel

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

13 December, Oslo, Norway

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@nupinytt](#)

The Trump Administration's New Africa Strategy

The Heritage Foundation

13 December, Washington DC, United States [Webcast]

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@heritage](#)

Stability, Democracy, and Islamism in Bangladesh

The Hudson Institute

13 December, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@HudsonInstitute](#)

CTED & ICDPPC Side Event to CTC Special Meeting – Privacy and Data-Protection Considerations

UN CTED

13 December, New York City, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@UN_CTED](#)

CTC Special Meeting to Review Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters

UN CTED

13 December, New York City, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@UN_CTED](#)

Booktalk: Jihadism Constrained

Foreign Policy Research Institute

14 December, Philadelphia, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@fpri](#)

Geneva Launch: Protecting Civilians – When is ‘Incidental Harm’ Excessive?

Chatham House

14 December, Geneva, Switzerland

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ChathamHouse](#)

Is Somalia on Track?

Danish Institute for International Studies

17 December, Copenhagen, Denmark

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@diisdsk](#)

Going Global on Chemical Safety and Security

Stimson Center

17 December, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@StimsonCenter](#)

Spotlight on Armed Violence in Rio de Janeiro: How We Got Here and What Will Happen Next

International Institute for Strategic Studies

17 December, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@IISS_org](#)

Society & Politics in North Africa: Transformations & Challenges

ORSAM Center for Middle Eastern Studies

27-28 December, Istanbul, Turkey

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@orsamtr](#)

January 2019

Building Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies Amid a World on Fire

United States Institute of Peace

9 January, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@USIP](#)

London Launch: Protecting Civilians – When is ‘Incidental Harm’ Excessive?

Chatham House

14 January, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ChathamHouse](#)

Restraining Great Powers: Strategies for Small States

Chatham House

15 January, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ChathamHouse](#)

Battlespace Surveillance – Owning the Night

Cranfield University

16 January, Chepstow, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@CranfieldUni](#)

Ten Conflicts to Watch in 2019

Chatham House

17 January, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ChathamHouse](#)

Terrorism Analyst Training Course 2019

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

21 January – 1 February, Singapore, Singapore

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RSIS_NTU](#)

J. W. Dafoe Political Studies Students' Conference 2019: WWI & Versailles 1919: The Making of the Modern World (Dis) Order

University of Manitoba

23-24 January, Winnipeg, Canada

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@umanitoba](#)

12th Annual International Conference

Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)

27-29 January, Tel Aviv, Israel

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@inssisrael](#)

Homeland Security Symposium & Expo: Achieving Resilience in America's Critical Infrastructure

CNU Center for American Studies

29 January, Virginia, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@CNUcaptains](#)

February 2019**ASPI Women, Peace and Security Masterclass: In Policy and on Operations**

Australian Strategic Policy Institute

13 February, Canberra, Australia

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ASPI_org](#)

The Outbreak of WWII: 80 Years Later

Foreign Policy Research Institute

16 February, New York City, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@fpri](#)

March 2019**Security & Counter Terror Expo**

Clarion Events

5-6 March, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@SCTX19](#)

Security and Defence 2019: Patterns, Disruptions, and Responses

Chatham House

7 March, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ChathamHouse](#)

The Ghosts of Langley: Into the CIA's Heart of Darkness

The Institute of World Politics

23 March, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@theIWP](#)

About The Compiler Reinier Bergema is a Strategic Analyst at The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS) and an Assistant Editor at Perspectives on Terrorism. His research interests include, inter alia, radicalisation and Dutch (jihadist) foreign fighters. He is project leader of HCSS' Jihadist Foreign Fighter Monitor (#JihFFMON).

About *Perspectives on Terrorism*

Perspectives on Terrorism (PoT) is a joint publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), headquartered in Vienna, Austria, and the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) of Leiden University, Campus The Hague. PoT is published six times per year as a free, independent, scholarly peer-reviewed online journal available in both HTML and PDF versions at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com> and in PDF version (only) at <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/perspectives-on-terrorism>.

PoT seeks to provide a platform for established scholars as well as academics and professionals entering the interdisciplinary fields of Terrorism-, Political Violence- and Conflict Studies.

The editors invite researchers and readers to:

- present their perspectives on the prevention of, and response to, terrorism and related forms of violent conflict;
- submit to the journal accounts of evidence-based, empirical scientific research and analyses;
- use the journal as a forum for debate and commentary on issues related to the above.

Perspectives on Terrorism has sometimes been characterised as ‘nontraditional’ in that it dispenses with some of the rigidities associated with commercial print journals. Topical articles can be published at short notice and reach, through the Internet, a much larger audience than subscription-fee based paper journals. Our on-line journal also offers contributors a higher degree of flexibility in terms of content, style and length of articles – but without compromising professional scholarly standards.

The journal’s Research Notes, Special Correspondence, Op-Eds and other content are reviewed by members of the Editorial Team, while its Articles are peer-reviewed by outside academic experts and professionals. While aiming to be policy-relevant, PT does not support any partisan policies regarding (counter-) terrorism and waging conflicts. Impartiality, objectivity and accuracy are guiding principles that we require contributors to adhere to. They are responsible for the content of their contributions and retain the copyright of their publication.

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