



Far Right Terrorism

Similarities and Differences vs.

Islamic Terrorism

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Background

In recent decades the Salafi Jihadist terrorism has been perceived as the most threatening one to the culture, interests and the lives of western communities as it stems from irreconcilable culture clash that per the Salafi belief cannot co-exist (Bakker, 2006).

Yet, a fresh observation of statistical data of terror activities reveals an additional phenomenon. Per the **Global Terrorism Database**, since the 9/11 attacks, most of the terror related deaths in the U.S. have been associated with hate crimes and mass shootings rather than Jihadi-Islamic ideology. In fact, since the Boston Marathon attack in 2013 and the San Bernardino shooting spree in 2015, both of which perpetrated out of radical Islamic motives, all other terror incidents have been classified as either hate based or far right ideology based and have caused dozens of dead (**Ritchie, Hasell, Roser & Appel 2020**). Per a research published by the **IEP – Institute for Economic and Peace** the number of “traditional” terror related deaths has plummeted however more and more countries suffer from terror attack originated by far-right elements (**Martyr, 2019**). In fact, as of February 2020, the common assessment is that within the U.S. far right violence is the biggest threat whereas al-Qaeda and ISIS take a lower level. The situation is similar in the U.K. in September 2019 the British police announced that it was committed to fight the far right that has become the fastest growing terror threat in the country (**Macfarquhar, 2020**).

In light of the above, this document will review the far-right terrorism phenomenon and compare it to the Salafi jihadi one, in terms of scope and similarities.

Far Right Terrorism Phenomenon

Attempting to compare the Salafi jihadist terror threat to that posed by the far right one must first understand the definition of a threat and in light of that analyze both phenomena in terms of scope, motivation, character, modus operandi and the way they are being perceived by the public. A threat in the sense of this document is the threat of terror based on **Prof. Boaz Ganor’s** definition: Terrorism is the deliberate use of violence by non-state actors aimed against civilian targets in order to achieve political, ideological, social and religious goals (**Ganor, 2003**). Per the above, terror has many faces and it doesn’t distinguish between an Islamic ideology, a far left one or a far right one.

As far as the definition of far right, it would seem that the definition varies from country to country. **The Global Terrorism Index** for 2019 published by the **IEP**, defined far right as a political ideology that its core is one of the following: extreme nationalism (mostly based on racism or some other unique feature), fascism, racism, Antisemitism, anti-immigration, Chauvinism, nativism, and xenophobia. That said, not all groups possessing one of these attributes may be considered a far right one and not all far right groups are automatically classified as violent or terrorist. The definition may also include the following groups: extreme anti feminists, extreme anti Muslims, extreme neo fascists, extreme anti immigrants, extreme neo Nazis and more.

Per the above Global Terrorism Index for 2019 several far right terrorism related facts have been published. First, **a growing trend**. The number of far-right terror attacks have grown by 320% between 2014 and 2018, especially in “western” states in Eastern Europe, North America and Oceania. In 2016 11 people have been killed, 2017 saw 26 dead and until the end of September 2018 77 people were killed in far-right terror attacks. In the U.S. alone, out of 57 terror attacks perpetrated in 2018, 28 were executed by far-right elements. Indeed, the number of far-right casualties is incomparable to that of the Islamic terrorism however the upward trend is evident. Second, **the identity of the perpetrators** – the most lethal far right attacks were perpetrated by lone attackers rather than groups.

Attempting to understand the expanding scope of far-right terrorism coming from the above data is problematic. First, it is hard to determine whether the rise in reported hate crimes is a real trend or the outcome of a wider media coverage of the phenomenon. That said, despite the relatively wide coverage of the phenomenon in the media many hate crimes are not being classified as such because they have not been perpetrated on a wide scope but rather targeted a small number of victims even though the perpetrators had been the citizens of that country driven by extreme right ideologies such as racism, anti-Semitism and white supremacy. In fact, there is no one official source that documents violent acts by far-right groups. Most of the data is gathered by academic bodies or NGOs and each of which gathers its data differently and has a different definition to what would be considered as far right (**Daniel Byman, 2019**).

Another problem in assessing the scope of the problem is that far right terrorism as a category is somewhat vague. **The Department of Homeland Security (DHS)**, defines Domestic Terrorism as terrorists who are not guided managed or motivated by Foreign Terror Organizations. Also, DHS

stresses that many times there is an overlap between domestic terror attacks and hate crimes as in both instances the perpetrators select their targets based on their race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation and/or gender. These may be perceived as arbitrary street violence aimed at the weak and motivated by deriving pleasure out bullying. Many such violent acts are not identified with a clear ideology and sometimes are driven by generic racist and nationalistic ideas. Moreover, sometimes they are classified as domestic terrorism so as to clearly distinguish them from international terrorism such as the Salafi jihadist one. Such classification creates another difficulty since domestic terrorism may include violence by local jihadists or even far left groups whose ideas contradict those of the far right (Byman, supra).

Even though far right terrorism is classified as domestic to distinguish it from international terrorism it should be noted that over time the far right has been adopting more and more characteristics of international violence such as attacks outside the borders of the state the perpetrator is a citizen of. Additionally, the ideas and concerns that occupy the far-right activists have become in many cases universal (e.g. concerns that the Jews take over the world, hatred towards Muslims etc.) and there are many far right organizations forming cells in other countries. Another similarity between Salafi terrorism and far right terrorism may be found in the modus operandi of both and the extensive use of the internet and social media for propaganda, recruitment and executing terror activities (**Hoffman, A Nasty Business**, 2002).

Still, there are some significant differences that need to be addressed when comparing the level of threat posed by each terror phenomenon. First, it is much harder for law enforcement agencies to contend with far-right terrorism since it is harder to define them as illegal due to the terrorists' allegedly legitimate ties with legitimate right-wing political elements. This nexus between a legitimate right-wing political activity and far right terrorism makes it harder for social media platforms' algorithms to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate content whereas with regard to jihadist and international terrorism content the social media platforms are more systematic and efficient (Hoffman, supra). Moreover, due to freedom of speech issues in the U.S. law enforcement agencies and corporations like Facebook and Google have extreme difficulties to monitor hate speech on social media or identify indications attesting to motivations to attack (**Hoffman & Ware, Are We Entering a New Era of Far-Right Terrorism?**, 2019).

Another issue tying law enforcement agencies' hands when it comes to far-right elements is the latter modus operandi. Almost all of the attacks perpetrated by far-right elements were executed by a lone attacker. It is much harder to monitor solitary and decentralized elements acting on their own than it is to monitor a group with a clear leader, financing chain and clear digital footprint. Moreover, the ideology of far-right attacker turns almost every type of population into a potential target and oftentimes learning how to execute an attack doesn't require more than an online tutorial (Hoffman & Ware, *supra*).

As far as the ability to contend with domestic terrorism the U.S. currently lacks a legal mechanism that enables to classify extreme groups as terror organizations (Macfarquhar, 2020). Per the U.S. federal law terrorism is defined as a criminal attack aimed at deterring civilians to gain influence over policy or government conduct. The law also defines 57 specific activities as terror crimes, but only small portion of the far-right activities fall under said list. It should be noted that activities that involve attacking civilians using weapons or vehicles or accumulating weapons are not included in said list even though these are frequently used by far-right elements. Further, there is an inherent complexity in passing legislation against far-right activity as these may very easily harm minorities that protest and demonstrate for their right and are in fact the targets of the far right's violence.

The same nexus between legitimate right-wing activity and far right terrorism is one of the most dramatic ingredients of the expanding influence potential of the latter. Far right terrorism is not harsher than the jihadist one however it may yield a wider political effect because it is oftentimes fueled by conventions prevalent within the local population albeit in a tamer fashion and within the boundaries of the law. In fact far right violence expresses, in an exaggerated manner, an existing political sentiment within the population hence the attitude towards it is more complex and its potential ramifications much more severe, whereas there is a clear and wide consensus that opposes jihadi ideology hence the effect of the latter is limited than the former (Hoffman, *supra*).

The fact that right wing violence amplifies certain views within the population is also connected to the fact that far right terrorism is classified as domestic terrorism. The far right is motivated by ideologies that oppose and reject foreigners and advocate protecting national borders whereas international terrorism aims at targets even outside the state's borders provided the intended target has an ideology or culture that doesn't reconcile with that of the terrorists. That said, far right groups have many weaknesses – often they are not well organized as a group, extremely divided and

therefore lack a clear leader that directs it onto a clear path or provides a plan of action. There is no formal membership or a clear hierarchical structure. Most of the activists have a criminal record, much higher than within the jihadi organizations, which can potentially compromise them as far as law enforcement. The main weakness of far-right movements is the fact that they are used to not being subject to increased enforcement and therefore their communication security is lower, and they act in the open (relatively) (Hoffman, supra).

One can see that there is significant difficulty to gauge the scope of the far-right terrorism because it is unclear if the phenomenon itself picked up or the media coverage did. Moreover, the difficulty to distinguish far right terrorism from either domestic or international terrorism. As far as the similarities between Salafi jihadist and far right terrorism, including their modus operandi, one can see many similarities and that far right terrorism becomes even more similar to international terrorism. The most significant difference between the two is the manner in which they are being treated by law enforcement agencies and the political influence potential each carries. As far as attempts to eradicate international terrorism are concerned, there is a long standing extensive domestic state activity, including efforts by social media platforms and international cooperation among intelligence agencies, all relying on the international consensus of the illegitimacy of such organizations. On the other hand, far right terrorism is not yet contended with the same intensity as it expresses a national-political sentiment within the public. This echoing of public sentiment coupled with ties with legitimate right wing is a central component in law enforcement's difficulties to contend with the phenomenon and what makes it to a potentially more significant threat.

Major Far Right Incidents Review – The Last Decade

2011 became a major milestone for far-right terror attacks perpetrated by lone attackers. The attack in Norway that year was the deadliest in the last decade. And claimed the lives of the most victims. It opened a window for many copycats who have used the lone attacker modus operandi and relied on the Breivik manifesto that became a cornerstone to a far-right ideology on the rise. This chain of attacks includes lone actors' attacks with 2019 being the deadliest with a high number of attacks. The reasons for the attacks are not yet crystal clear and it may be possible that different motivations prompted the attacks in Europe and the U.S. however some global events that predated them may have contributed to that. First, the immigration crisis in Europe following the Syrian conflict and the rise of ISIS who took control of many regions in Arab countries prompted an exodus of refugees.

The arrival of the latter to Europe and other countries around the world brought about a clash of cultures that rubbed many locals the wrong way. Second, the terror acts, perpetrated by al-Qaeda and ISIS on European soil stirred up strong emotions of revenge and the will to exact it by European residents. Third, the rise of the right-wing political parties in Europe due to the economic crisis, the renewed need for nationalism and the wishes of the citizens of those countries to put themselves at the top of their governments' priorities. All of the above provided a backdrop for the following:



1. **2011** – On June 22nd, 2011, Anders Breivik perpetrated two attacks against civilians and government officials. 77 people dies in the attacks and to date this is the deadliest mass murder in history to be carried out by a lone attacker. Prior to the attacks Breivik posted a 1,500 pages manifesto where he laid out his thoughts, by and large content that was copied from American far right web sites and quotes from anti jihadist content (**Kundani, 2012**). The manifesto stressed the threat of Islamic refuges taking control of Europe and accused western leaders and elite of supporting multi culturalism and Islamic colonization of Europe.
2. **2018** – On October 27th, 2018, Robert Bower carried out a mass shooting attack at the Tree of life (Etz Haim) synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA. He killed 11 people and injured six more. Bowers possessed multiple weapons and was active on GAB, a social network that became a home for far-right activists interested in freely speaking their minds. Bowers post many anti-Jewish posts and presented a Nazi and far right ideology (**Roose & Turkewitz, 2018**).
3. **2019** – On March 15th, 2019 Brenton Tarrant perpetrated mass shooting in two mosques in New Zealand. He killed 59 people and injured 51 more. Tarrant was a New Zealand resident and carried out his attacks after he had posted a manifesto online where he proclaimed that Anders Breivik served as his inspiration for the attack. The manifesto was titled “The Great

Replacement” and purported to present the war the white race found himself in because of the fall of Europe to the hands of the minorities and refugees in recent years. The weapons used by Tarrant were filled with writings and slogans from various wars in the history of Europe vs. the Muslim conquerors and were freely posted to Tarrant’s Twitter account prior to his attacks. One of the inscriptions on his rifle’s magazine was "Vienna 1963" the battle where the Holy Roman Empire defeated the Ottoman Empire that represented the Muslims (see appendix). Tarrant’s attacks were broadcasted live on Facebook and were removed only hours after the attacks (**Kirkpatrick, 2019**).

4. **2019** – On April 27th, 2019, John Earnest perpetrated an attack at a Chabad synagogue in town of Poway near San Diego, CA, during Passover. He killed one person and injured three more. Earnest posted a racist and anti-Semitic manifesto on 8chan (web site) prior to his attack and accused the Jews of exterminating the European race, all as a part of conspiracy theory regarding the white race (**Mele, Medina & Murphy, 2019**).
5. **2019** – On August 3rd, 2019, Patrick Crusius perpetrated a shooting attack in El Paso, TX. He killed 22 people and injured 22 others. Here too, the perpetrator posted a personal manifesto containing far right and xenophobic characteristics prior to his attack (**Bogel-Burroughs, Arango & Benner, 2019**).
6. **2019** – On October 9th, 2019 Stephan Balliet, a German citizen attempted to kill Jews in Halle, Germany. The perpetrator tried to break into a synagogue which had surveilled for a long time, during Yom Kippur with the assistance of self-made weapons and explosives. He failed to breach the synagogue’s door but killed two Germans and injured two more. That attacker, too, posted a detailed manifesto prior to his attack where he had described his targets and the far-right ideology he had followed (**Dearden, 2019**).
7. **2020** – On February 20th, 2020 Tobias Rathjen, a German citizen and a far-right activist perpetrated a shooting attack at hookah clubs in Hanau, Germany. He killed ten people. He too posted a manifesto where he described his far-right ideology and concerns about the changes the foreigners bring to Germany (**Farrell, 2020**).

Far Right Terrorists’ Characteristics

Many far-right terrorists characteristics are not that different from those who typify jihadists. If the jihadi modus operandi is comprised of activities such as using social media or instant messaging platforms to communicate internally, carrying out propaganda and psychological warfare, obtaining finance to fund operations, recruitment and training (**Hoffman, The Use of Internet by Islamic**

Extremists, 2006) then the far right activists use the same for their needs (**Conway, Scrivens & McNair**, 2019), as follows:

Recruitment

Far right groups and militias are acting to recruit operatives out of U.S. veterans especially those who have returned home from wars. In fact, as a result of a close to two decades of fighting Islamic terrorism, mainly in Afghanistan and Iraq, there is a wide pool of fighters with knowledge and practical experience in warfare in the U.S. which can pass on their knowledge and skills. This knowledge turns these veterans into a prime recruiting target for extreme activist who lack this knowledge. Additionally, there are those veterans who have a hard time adjusting back to civilian life upon their return, which can trigger a decline and ideological susceptibility (**Hoffman & Ware, Are We Entering a New Era of Far-Right Terrorism**, supra). Much like ISIS' recruiting method that connected with extreme Islamic elements prone to carry out attacks so do far-right extremists connect with their pool of recruits via social media, web sites and encrypted channels.

Use of Internet

There are multiple examples for the use far-right elements are doing with advanced technologies to promote their agenda and activity. Social media and the internet at large serve not only as a recruiting tool but also as a propaganda and motivational tools. During March 2019 Brenton Tarrant perpetrated two lethal attacks on mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand where he killed 51 people and injured 49. During the 17 minutes of his killing spree Tarrant broadcasted his attacks on Facebook live and the clip has been watched thousands of times before Facebook removed it. In the next 24 hours Facebook removed some 1,500,000 copies of the clip from its web site (**Hoffman & Ware**, supra). Following the Christchurch massacre similar attempts to broadcast live far right terror attacks perpetrated in the California and Germany have been made either on social media platforms or online gaming platforms. In the Halle, Germany Yom Kippur attack (October 2019) a gun printed on a 3D printer was first used.

Far right terrorists are also using the internet to absorb ideological content and promote ideological discourse. Social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook and the extreme GAB and VOAT serve as a catalyst for the dissemination for hate ideology. A research conducted in Germany showed that in towns where the use of Facebook was more extensive more attacks were carried

out against immigrants. The radicalization process of these activists may even start on gaming web sites where one can play in a group. An example for the above manifested itself in one of the far-right attacks where the attack was broadcasted in one of these gaming sites (**New York times**, 2018).

The phenomenon of posting manifestos online by far-right terrorists appeared in the Norway attacks in 2011 and continued with many attackers in the U.S., New Zealand and Germany. Imaging Boards web sites such as 4chan and 8chan became an important means to disseminate content and enabled far right activists to converse anonymously online. 8chan web site provided a platform for some manifestos such Brenton Tarrant, who posted his manifesto and announced his intent to embark on his attacks approx. half an hour prior to the attacks in the popular far right chat room Politically Incorrect. Similar to jihadists, far right activists are making extensive use upload and file share web sites to disseminate their message which enables the delay of the removal of said content. They call this process “taking the red pill” which is borrowed from the Matrix movies and means that one must wake up, read the content and see the truth. This process is akin to the religious awakening and repenting in Islamic ideology when the activist transforms from a state of ignorance (Jahiliyya) to a state of awareness.

Over the years one can observe a shift of far-right activists on social media. With increased content filtration by social media platforms such as Facebook, Alt Right ideology followers emigrated from Facebook to the Russian VKontakte (VK) which is more lenient and does not block far right content (**Farivar**, 2019). Per one of the tests conducted some 10,000 American citizens out of 100 far right groups have moved to VK in recent years (please see appendix E).

To date, many far right pages such as the American Atomwaffen Division’s, the Scandinavian Nord Front’s and most of the neo-Nazi groups in Germany may be found on VK.

Major web sites and platforms in use by far-right elements:

Web Site Type	Name	Use
	Facebook	Used by far-right activists to disseminate such as the New Zealand attacks that were broadcasted live.
	Twitter	A means to disseminate mostly political messages

Social Networks	YouTube	A means to share far right clips
	Vkontakte	Many far-right activists moved here to avoid a stricter scrutiny by the western social media platforms
Alternative (Alt) Social Networks	Gab	One of the most popular among far right due to its minimal limitations. The Pittsburgh attacker was active on this platform
	WrongThink	A Facebook alternative for far-right activists. Was shut down.
	Voat	A Reddit alternative for far-right activists.
	PewTube	A YouTube alternative for far-right activists. Was shut down.
	Infogalactic	A Wikipedia alternative for far-right activists.
Imaging Boards	4chan	A chat room that enables anonymous correspondence. This web site, especially the chat room Pol (Politically Incorrect) serve as a chat room for far-right activists.
	8chan	A chat room that enables anonymous correspondence. This web site, especially the chat room Pol (Politically Incorrect) serve as a chat room for far-right activists. The site was shut down by the authorities after a few attackers posted their manifestos on it prior to their attacks. It resurfaced under the name 8kun however without the Pol chat room.
	Endchan	A 4chan and 8chan alternative site
Instant Messaging	Telegram	Used by far-right activists either in public or private groups as a means of communications.
	WhatsApp	Serves as a means of communications for far-right activists.
Web Sites and Forums		One of a designated web sites formed by far-right activist. Served as a forum for discourse for far-right activists from all corners of the world and especially for Americans. The forum has been hacked in 2016 and shut down.

Lone Attacker

Dr. Picart (**Picart**, 2015) explains that the jihadi lone attacker's radicalization process is comprised of four stages: (i) Pre-Radicalization – normal life without any criminal record, suddenly affected by a tragic event that creates a distance from the person's environment. The void created by the tragic event is being filled by a search for a home and identity; (ii) Identity Consolidation – in this case a religious preacher or an organization with similar values and ideology; (iii) Indoctrination – cyber interaction with like-minded elements and a search for purpose; (iv) Jihadism – a shift from speech to action and executing radical activities. The above process is applicable to almost all of the far-right activists who have carried out lone attacks in the past decade. The tragic event for them may be a loss of job, or, per their perception, a loss of the cultural values of their country in favor of multiculturalism caused by massive immigration. The immigration crisis in Europe serves a main foundation for many manifestos, including Tarrant's, that despite living in New Zealand felt a yearning to the pure European culture due to his family's origin. The indoctrination stage is central in these people's radicalization process where they absorb far right content from multiple sources from the internet through political parties to manifestos posted by other attackers. Example to the above may be observed in the copycat phenomenon that took place since the Breivik attack in 2011 and his posting of his manifesto. In that sense, the Jihadism stage is akin to militant-ism for far-right activists when their far-right political ideology is being converted into action.

Almost all the terror attacks perpetrated in the U.S. in 2019 were carried out by lone attackers, who weren't members of or even connected to some terror organization. It same is true in other cases of "lone wolves", such as the 2011 Breivik attacks in Norway and in New Zealand and Germany in 2019. It would seem that the position held by commanders or organization leaders who devise strategies, command and direct actions and modus operandi has been taken by online manifestos of previous attackers (**Hoffman & Ware**, supra). The latter encourage solitary terror attacks out of racist and/or various anti-establishment ideologies, as was the case with Breivik in 2011. Similarly, the New Zealand and Germany attackers have posted their ideologies on social media prior to embarking on their murderous sprees and expressed their concerns of immigrants or other minorities taking over the white race in their countries.

Ideology and Motivation for Action

Beyond its religious ideology and much like other terror organizations throughout history al-Qaeda has also **expressed political goals**, such as a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and the rest of the middle east. Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi profile and goals in the organization were different and became a significant milestone for the organization. His actions attest to sadism, an appetite for celebrity and minimal understanding of Islamic ideologies (Fisher, 2019). Over al-Qaeda's objections, al-Zarqawi was very popular among the rank and file recruits and after his death ISIS was formed with a slightly different approach to terrorism. **Where most terror organizations act, recruit and motivate for action out of political aspirations and common goals for hatred, al-Zarqawi and ISIS encouraged violence for the sake of violence and spoke about apocalyptic ideology of a global war between Muslims and the rest of the world.**

When one closely examines today's far right manifestos one can see how they echo the same sentiments of ideology and motivation expressed by ISIS – ideas of apocalyptic race wars – only the threat to Islam is substituted with a threat to the white race (Fisher, 2019). These ideologies are oftentimes generic, disorganized and confused and in fact turns almost every minority group to a legitimate target and the ideology to an excuse to elevate the attacker's stature, as has happened in Norway. Prior to his attacks Breivik posted a 1,500 pages manifesto, **the overwhelming majority of which a content copied from American far-right web sites, quotes from anti jihadi elements and references to neo-Nazi ideologies which Breivik had adopted with slight variations**: instead of a threat to Aryan culture he addressed the threat to the white race, instead of black dominance he speaks about Muslim population in Europe and instead of conspiracy theory about a Jewish domination he accuses western elite for supporting multiculturalism and Islamic colonization of Europe (Kundani, 2012). The manifesto highlighted the threat of Muslim immigrants taking control of Europe, concerns of the extinction of the Nordic genotype and in general concerns of a race war.

Beyond the apocalyptic and disorganized ideology which was mostly copied or rewritten from other sources Breivik also wrote about himself, his musical taste and his drinking preferences. These seem to be the only original parts of his manifesto (Hoffman & Ware, supra). In his trial in Oslo he dubbed his attacks as his "book launch" and testified that he had evaluated the number of people he had to kill in order for his manifesto to be read by others. He also planned to broadcast the attacks live on YouTube but failed to do so. Breivik was diagnosed as suffering from narcissistic personality disorder

and it is evident he wanted to become famous. His ideology and manifesto, as well as others', attest by the very virtue of their posting to narcissistic motives who drove these persons to action (Seierstad, 2019). They echo a school of thought, started with al-Zarqawi and ISIS, that allows everyone to commit murder as long as it is done in the name of an ideology, as vague as it may be and that violence in and of itself is rewarding. Moreover, that violence has become a platform for fame, elevating the name and profile of the attacker and a catalyst for others that feel they have a way to achieve their own fame and recognition, regardless of their targets. Further, the ideologies behind the far-right attacks, enable the attackers, which often act on a solitary basis, to gain a sense of belonging and identification (Hoffman & Ware, supra).

Foreign Fighters

The term Foreign Fighters mostly addresses Salafi jihadists recruited by terror organizations such as ISIS and al-Qaeda from western countries to fight in various jihadi theaters, including Europe. Additionally, there are other fighters that have arrived at the Syrian battlefields to fight ISIS for a non-religious ideology. The latter are far-right and far-left activists who volunteered to fight in Syria with those they perceive as their ideological enemies. Among this group one can find far-right activists from Greece, mercenaries from Serbia and neo fascists from Norway who came to fight alongside the Assad troops. The estimate is that approx. 2,000 such fighters took part in the fight against ISIS in Syria and in the war in the Ukraine. Some of those fighters belong to Christian militias, follow anti Muslim ideologies and present themselves as the "new Crusaders". These fighters see themselves as the protectors of Europe from the Islamic ideology and internal and foreign enemies who wish to eradicate the white race and western culture. The clusters of these fighters returning home after having fought in Syria are not different from those who returned home after having fought for Salafi jihadist ideology. All of the above return to their countries with battlefield experience, skilled in using weapons and armed with extreme ideologies and pose a threat to the government of their countries (Koch, 2019).

Test Case – Atomwaffen Division

Atomwaffen Division (nuclear weapon division in German), is a neo-Nazi organization formed in 2016 out of members of the Iron March forum that served as a platform for white supremacists. It is recognized as an extreme organization whose founders were inspired by Charles Manson, an American neo-Nazi cult leader that committed several murders in the 1960s. The organization makes use of violence and terror and supports lone attacker violent acts. Members of the organization have been tied to several murders since its inception. It was started by Brandon Russell in the U.S. and to date active in other countries, such as the U.K., Canada, Germany, the Baltic states and other European countries (Anti-Defamation League). Per a research conducted on the organization (Ware, 2019) its membership is 60-80 members however it enjoys many more supporters who are being directed in a decentralized hierarchy mode and comprise some 20 cells worldwide. The organization already declared that it intended to continue with violent acts and would attempt to recruit U.S. soldiers. The organization is currently run John Cameron Denton, a 25 years' old American, whose internet alias is "rape". Denton assumed his position once Russell was imprisoned in 2018 on for possessing explosives.

The organization operates in many respects much like a jihadi terror organization (Ware, 2019):

1. **Training Camps** – the organization holds training camps in remote areas and the recruits are being trained by former military personnel. One of the known camps is Camp Hate erected in 2018 in the Nevada desert.
2. **Hierarchy** – the organization has decentralized hierarchy and includes cells worldwide as well as lone actors. It is like the post 9/11 al-Qaeda that converted to decentralized hierarchy from a traditional one.
3. **Holy War** – the members believe in a Racial Holy War, called by them "RaHoWa" that need to be prepared to. This term is prevalent among white supremacists and was first coined by the Creativity Movement.
4. **Globalization** – the organization maintains ties with local cells in several countries. In December 2018 members of a neo-Nazi cell named Sonnenkrieg Division, who had ties with the organization were arrested after threatening Prince Harry.
5. **Ideology** - the organization follows a neo-Nazi ideology and defines itself as a revolutionary national-socialist movement, opposed to the existence of Jews, gay people and minorities.

They even declared that they wished to form the fourth Reich and that the American government is led by Jews wishing to eradicate the white race.

6. **Source of Authority** – Similar to jihadi organizations that rely on Quran and Muslim ideologists such as Hassan al-Bannah and Abdallah Azam, Atomwaffen relies on a 563 pages book titled Siege and authored by a neo Nazi by the name of James Mason. It is comprised of a collection of newsletters Mason wrote for another American neo Nazi organization named “The National-Socialist Liberation Front” in 1980 and is considered a required reading for new recruits. In the book Mason calls real neo Nazis to fight a guerilla war against the government.
7. **Use of Terror** – Atomwaffen distinguishes itself from other neo-Nazi organizations by openly supporting the use of terror and violence to promote its political agenda.
8. **Recruitment** – Atomwaffen recruits new recruits from the ranks of the military to use their experience and skill set in explosives, weaponry and warfare tactics. Further, from former members’ testimonies the recruitment process also takes place on online gaming platforms in order to reach a young and impressionable crowd.
9. **Propaganda** – the organization uses several internet platforms for communication and propaganda, inter alia, atomwaffendivion.org, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, VKontakte, designated forums such as Iron March and instant messaging platforms such as Telegram.

During 2019 a big hack into Iron March leaked information on the organization’s activity. The leak included public and private correspondence of Iron March members including Atomwaffen Division members who were active in that forum. The information gleaned in the hack was shared multiple times and are even being investigated by an independent organization called Belling Cat. Per their findings, the correspondence in the forum enabled the identification of dozens of far-right activists still on active duty in the U.S. military.

Summary

The rise of the political right in Europe in the face of the immigration crisis, the resurgence of the nationalistic sentiment around the world, global economic crises and the current global culture clash will likely elevate the threat of the far-right. Part of a right-wing ideology, as legitimate as it may be, is being converted to violent acts by organizations and individuals and becomes more and more extreme. Data on terror attacks in recent years validate the trend, there is an increase of far-right violence compared to the Islamic one. Since 9/11 and the U.S.'s uncompromising war on Islamic terrorism, right-wing terrorism has been able to slip under the radar for a number of reasons: (i) **misclassification of its scope** – many far-right terror activities are classified as hate crimes rather than terror. Moreover, there is no single consolidated official source that monitors far-right violence. Further, the media coverage of far-right violence pales in comparison to that of Islamic terrorism and thus blocks awareness to the phenomenon; (ii) **lack of standard definition** – far-right terrorism is vague as a category and lacks a clear definition. The U.S. distinguishes between domestic terrorism and hate crimes and the far-right fits both categories. Moreover, far-right terrorism has become a global problem as it branched internationally, however only Islamic terrorism currently falls under the definition of international terrorism; (iii) **difficulties for law enforcement agencies** – law enforcement agencies encounter difficulties when dealing with the far-right due to political sensitivities. Far-right activist are often connected with legitimate right-wing political elements and there is a fine line between a left-wing extremist and a right-wing extremist. Further, there is a physical/technological difficulty as most of recent years' attacks have been perpetrated by lone attackers. Law enforcement agencies have a hard time contending with this phenomenon, be it jihadi lone attacker or a far-right one; (iv) **Legal** – the U.S. doesn't have the legal mechanism that will enable it to classify extreme groups as terror organizations which makes it harder to deal with them on the legal front.

Far right terrorism today is very similar to the radical Islamic one – the far-right wishes to return to a **“pure” Europe** with no minorities is reminiscent of the Salafi jihadists' wishes to return the **era of the first three caliphs**. We bear witness to white supremacy organizations see themselves in a process of preparation for a **racial holy war**, much like the Islamic **jihad**. The **modus operandi** of both is similar and includes recruitment, training, online propaganda and the use of lone attackers. We see that the far-right elements rely on **authority sources** to base their ideology on, be it **Charles**

Manson in the U.S. or **Anders Breivik** in Norway or **Brenton Tarrant** in New Zealand, much like the radical Islam that relies on ideologists such a **Hassan al-Bannah** and **Abdallah Azam**.

Based on available information as this time, far-right terrorism is expected to grow and affect other far-right activists globally. Even though it may seem like a local problem limited to certain countries, Islamic terrorism history proves otherwise and therefore far-right terrorism must be treated as a global phenomenon that requires international cooperation. In order to eradicate the phenomenon governments and law enforcement agencies must handle far-right terrorism with the same tools they use to battle Islamic terrorism.

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Appendices

Appendix A – An increase of far-right terrorist activity, 2010-2018 (Institute for Peace & Economics, 2019)

FIGURE 2.5

Far-right terrorist incidents in the west, 1970-2018

There has been a 320 per cent increase in far-right terrorism in the past five years.



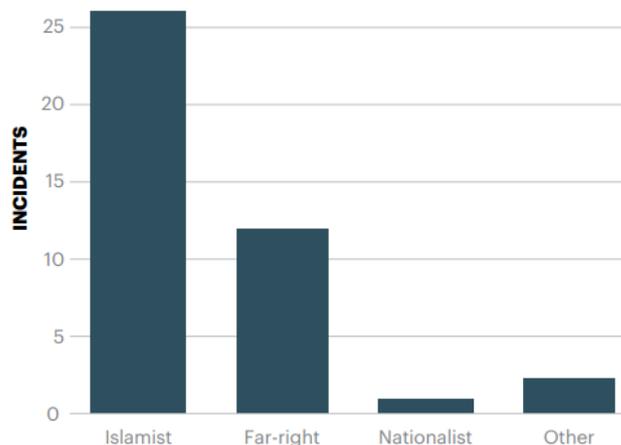
Source: START GTD, IEP Calculations

Appendix B – Number of terror attacks with more than 10 fatalities per ideology of attacker

FIGURE 2.9

Number of attacks with more than ten fatalities, 1970-2018

There have been 11 far-right attacks that have killed at least ten people.



Source: START GTD, IEP Calculations

Appendix C – Brenton Tarrant Twitter account and his latest tweet prior to his attacks



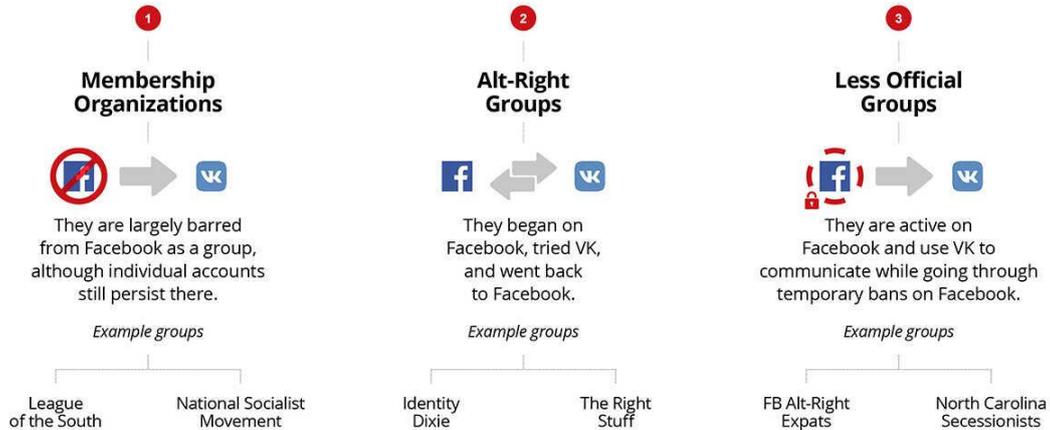
Appendix D – Photos of Tarrant’s weapons as posted to his Twitter account prior to his attacks



Appendix E – American far-right activists’ migration from Facebook to VKontakte (Farivar, 2019)

How White Nationalist Groups Use VK

About 10,000 people in 100 right-wing American groups have joined the Russian social media site VK.



Source: Megan Squire, Elon University

VOA

Appendix F – Posters from Atomwaffen Division’s official propaganda web site



ABOUT THE ICT

Founded in 1996, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) is one of the leading academic institutes for counter-terrorism in the world, facilitating international cooperation in the global struggle against terrorism. ICT is an independent think tank providing expertise in terrorism, counter-terrorism, homeland security, threat vulnerability and risk assessment, intelligence analysis and national security and defense policy.

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