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## CONCEPT OF RIGHT - WING EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

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**Abstract:** Extreme right-wing violence and terrorism today are a growing threat to Western societies. This form of political violence differs greatly from others by some key features. Following the 9/11 attacks, policymakers, security and intelligence agencies have allocated most of their capacity to tackling religious militant extremism and terrorism. This has led to imbalances in dealing with threats, especially with the far right and appropriate ways of dealing with them. Despite the extensive history of right-wing terrorism in Western democracies, a systematic categorization of this phenomenon is lacking. In the past decades, extremism, political violence, and terrorism have largely been fueled by radical right-wing movements. In April 1995, in Oklahoma, USA, far-right activists were responsible for the bombing of the Federal Building. In Germany, neo-Nazi gangs have been involved in a violent campaign against foreigners and asylum seekers. These events have become a serious dilemma for the leaders of modern democratic states. Until recently, extreme right-wing violence and terrorism was characterized by relatively frequent incidents but a small number of deaths. For the last two decades, right wing terrorism has been overshadowed by mass casualties caused by militant Islamist organizations. In the US, since the 9/11 attacks, more people have been killed by far-right extremists than by militant Islamist extremists. Further, the July 22, 2011 attacks in Norway and the attacks on the Christ Church Mosque, New Zealand on March 15, 2019, proved that lonely actors inspired by far-right views are ready and can kill a large number of people. These incidents of mass murder have set a new standard for a new generation of far-right terrorists. They work independently, but are virtually connected through the Internet, where they are inspired to commit terrorist acts. Security analysts in Western democracies take delayed measures, downplaying far-right potential for terrorist violence. Right wing extremism is quite difficult to define, and there are over 20 definitions to describe this phenomenon. The reason is the different goals and ideologies of right wing terrorist organizations. Some of the common goals revolve around xenophobia, racism, nationalism and the desire for a strong state. Right-wing terrorism is motivated by various far-right ideologies, and neo-fascism, neo-nazism and white nationalism are the most pronounced. Right-wing terrorists aim to overthrow governments and replace them with nationalist or fascist regimes.

This paper will analyze the concept of right-wing terrorism, the lessons learned to tackle it, and will propose recommendations to counter the threat by taking appropriate legal action against perpetrators of extreme right-wing violence.

**Keywords:** right wing, terrorism, violence, security

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Western democracies have been subjected to constant violence by militant right-wing extremist groups. Incidents, such as Islamophobic violence, anti-immigrant violence, anti-government attacks and attacks on political opponents, ethnic minorities and homosexuals, have continued to occur. The United States has not been spared from this phenomenon. In the United States, there has been a rise in right-wing extremism and political violence in the form of white supremacists, neo-Nazis and racists. For the international public, these events were unavailable; only a few of these incidents received media and international attention. This is because right-wing extremist attacks are seen as largely isolated, compared to attacks by militant Islamist organizations.

In Germany, the so-called National Socialist Underground (NSU) cell, between 2000 and 2007, carried out three bomb attacks and 15 armed robberies, killing 10 people and attempting to kill 43 people.<sup>31</sup> In Norway, on July 22, 2011, right-wing extremist Anders Breivik launched a terrorist attack that killed 77 people.<sup>32</sup> On June 17, 2015, 9 black worshippers were killed by a 21 year old white supremacist in Charleston, South Carolina, USA.<sup>33</sup> In Pittsburgh, USA, on October 27, 2018, a right-wing extremist killed 11 and injured 7. This was the deadliest act of

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<sup>31</sup> Erin, M. *Ideological Motivations of Terrorism in the United States, 1970-2016*. College Park, Maryland, November, (2017)

<sup>32</sup> Unni, T. and Puckett, K.M. *The Mystery of the Lone Wolf Killer: Anders Behring Breivik and the Threat of Terror in Plain Sight*. Pegasus Books, ISBN 1681773341, (2017)

<sup>33</sup> Gary, M. J. *Surviving Mass Victim Attacks*. Rowman & Littlefield, (2018)

anti-Semitic violence in American history.<sup>34</sup> On November 6, 2018, six people, right-wing extremists, were arrested in France. They planned an attack and a murder on President Emmanuel Macron.<sup>35</sup> In Spain, on November 8, 2018, police prevented a planned attack on Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. The assassination attempt was planned by a 63-year-old neo-fascist who sought to avenge the Spanish government's plans to exhume and move the remains of former Spanish dictator Francisco Franco.<sup>36</sup>

It has become clear that right-wing extremists have carried out a number of significant terrorist attacks in Western countries in the past decades.

## 2. RIGHT WING EXTREMISM VS. TERRORISM

What is meant by terms like the far right, radical right or extreme right, or concepts like extreme right wing violence, extreme right wing terrorism and hate crime. These terms are often used, but they should be taken into account in their ambiguity, i.e. they must be used precisely in the context of the phenomenon being analyzed. The terms left-wing and right-wing originate in the French Revolution and are closely linked to the idea of egalitarianism: while leftists generally support policies designed to reduce social inequality, the right views social inequality and corresponding social hierarchies as being. To the right of the traditional conservative parties is the far right, which is characterized by authoritarianism and nativism (a science of the innateness of certain understandings, notions and truths - unlike those gained through experience or upbringing).

One can also distinguish between the radical and extreme versions of the extreme left and the far right, where radical movements tend to change within democracy, while extremist movements reject democracy, and are prepared for violent or other methods to achieve their goal. According to Europol's definition, far-right terrorist groups tend to change the whole political, social and economic system into a form of an extremist right-wing model whose ideological roots are from National Socialism.<sup>37</sup>

Right-wing extremism is a much broader concept that encompasses a diverse range of groups with different ideologies, from youth street gangs to neo-Nazi terrorist cells to anti-Islamic activists and political parties seeking to influence change through the political system. However, there are some defining features such as: racism, xenophobia, ultranationalism and authoritarianism.

One of the issues that is problematic and related to identifying and classifying right-wing terrorism is the lack of clarity between the various concepts used to describe this form of political violence. In fact, many incidents caused by right-wing terrorism are analyzed within the concept of "hate crime" and thus share similar characteristics with terrorism.<sup>38</sup>

Hate crime defined as "a crime motivated by bias towards the victim or victims, a certain perceived identity group" - can be manifested through the desire to "terrorize a wider target group" or create a state of intimidation, including through speech of hatred. The similarities between hate crime and terrorism are linked because the crime victim is chosen because of her group identity, not because of her individual behavior. The purpose of terrorism and hate crime is to terrorize a larger group of people than those who have been directly subjected to violence.

However, some analysts disagree with this claim because they think these two are in fact different forms of violence. The assertion is based on key differences such as the unplanned and spontaneous commission of hate crime, the target group of hate crime are minority groups, and these crimes are poorly publicized. Looking at hate crime, it can be concluded that this type of crime violates social values and norms such as equality, freedom and fundamental human rights. However, we can agree that there are similarities between terrorism and hate crime, the way they are perpetrated and the perception of fear.

## 3. EXTREME RIGHT WING MOVEMENTS

What distinguishes extremists from radicals is that extremists reject democracy and promote violence, through illegal or undemocratic means, which they consider legitimate. At a lower level, we distinguish three groups of far-right movements: cultural nationalists, ethnic nationalists, and racial nationalists.

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<sup>34</sup> Zezima, K. and Wesley L. *Suspected synagogue shooter appears to have railed against Jews, refugees online.*

Washington Post, October 27, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/suspected-synagogue-shooter-appears-to-have-railed-against-jews-refugees-online/2018/10/27/e99dd282-da18-11e8-a10f-b51546b10756\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/suspected-synagogue-shooter-appears-to-have-railed-against-jews-refugees-online/2018/10/27/e99dd282-da18-11e8-a10f-b51546b10756_story.html), accessed January 21, 2020

<sup>35</sup> Jarry, E. *France arrests six over plot to attack Macron: official.* Reuters, November 6, (2018) available on <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-security/france-arrests-six-over-plot-to-attack-macron-officialidUSKCN1NB1KX>, accessed January 22, 2020).

<sup>36</sup> BBC News, "Spain Sánchez 'attack plot': Police arrest gun suspect," November 8, 2018, available on <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46138158>, accessed January 25, 2020

<sup>37</sup> Europol. *TE-SAT 2013 EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report.* European Police Office. (2013)

<sup>38</sup> James, J. & Kimberly, P. *Hate crimes: criminal law & identity politics.* New York: Oxford University Press, (1998)

- Cultural nationalists usually represent radical right-wing populist parties and movements that are fighting against immigration and Islam. These parties and movements generally operate within democratic values and do not promote violence, although they may vary in their degree of radical measures taken. They use violent rhetoric, and their opponents are called "traitors". These movements are not usually preoccupied with racial differences, but rather focus on cultural differences, claiming that Islam is incompatible with Western culture and society. Therefore, they promote assimilation, that is the idea of immigrants of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to abandon their original culture and adopt Western culture.<sup>39</sup>

- Ethnic nationalists. An example of an extreme right wing nationalist movement in Europe is the "Identitarian Movement". They do not want to talk about "race" at all, but rather use the term "ethnic identity". They believe that all ethnic groups have an equal right to survival and protection. According to them, in order to maintain ethnic diversity, and to preserve ethnically unique norms, characteristics and cultures, ethnic groups need to exist separately. This is often referred to as "ethno-pluralism"<sup>40</sup>(a particular territory may only belong to those who possess a long lineage of ancestors descended from it), and compares to "apartheid" (policy of racial discrimination, racial segregation). According to them, ethnic interference and assimilation are considered harmful. Unlike cultural nationalists, ethnic nationalists tend to distance themselves from very basic liberal values and promote conservative views on gender roles. They strongly oppose immigration and promote the conspiracy theory of the "big exchange".<sup>41</sup> They argue that global liberal elites force non-European nations into Europe and commit "genocide of the indigenous European population". To prevent this, in their view, all non-ethnic Europeans will have to return to their home countries. This theory was later embraced by both cultural and racial nationalists, and was part of the manifesto of right-wing terrorist Brenton Tarrant. On March 15, 2019, in the city of Christchurch, New Zealand, a massive terrorist attack targeted local Muslims. 51 people were killed in the attack. The attacker used the social networking site Facebook to broadcast the armed attack, and also wrote a 73-page manifesto titled "The Great Exchange" opposing immigration, expressing his political views.

- Racial nationalists strive for a society based on ideas of racial purity and accept totalitarian principles. They derive their ideological inspiration from ideas derived from National Socialism, fascism, Christian identity, or variants of white supremacy. Their view of the world is usually based on anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, claiming that Jews promote immigration, egalitarianism (equal rights for everyone) and racial interference to destroy the white race. These movements reject democracy and the ideas of universal human rights and consider that violence is necessary and legitimate for the achievement of their goals. They expect that there will eventually be a racial war, in which "racial traitors" and people of the "wrong race" will be exterminated or, at least, expelled from the country. The differences between these three types of far-right movements are never clearly defined. Although certain groups may be classified in any of these divisions, they largely cooperate and rely on each other.

#### 4. ACTORS OF THE EXTREME RIGHT-WING VIOLENCE

There are several actors who practice extreme right-wing violence::

- Gangs of young people, white supremacists and skinheads;

These are groups of young people, mostly under 18, operating locally. These groups are uniting around popular, far-right symbols that may not know their meaning. These groups often lack strong leadership and organizational capacity. White nationalism, or supremism, is an ideology that advocates the racial domination of white people's national identity, and is underpinned by the notion of white supremacy - the belief in the superiority of the white race and inferiority over all other races. Although they operate in small local groups, they are still part of a mass network that connects them globally.

- Terrorist cells and lone individual terrorists;

This category includes individuals and small groups who commit planned acts of violence, motivated by far-right ideologies. Individuals may be affiliated with groups, or may have been part of various groups during their ideological training. Anders Breivik was a lonely actor who was part of several political parties and movements, and had been supported by like-minded people on the internet before launching the terrorist attack. A small group may form a terrorist cell, which may be independent or affiliated with a global organization.<sup>42</sup>

- Political movements and paramilitary groups;

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<sup>39</sup> Lars, E. B. *The Anti-Islamic Movement: Far Right and Liberal?*. Florence: European University Institute, (2018)

<sup>40</sup> Raphael, S. *Against Old Europe: Critical Theory and Alter-Globalization Movements*. Routledge. New York. (2016)

<sup>41</sup> Byrd, D. & Miri, S.J. *Frantz Fanon and Emancipatory Social Theory: A View from the Wretched*. Leiden, Boston: Brill. (2019)

<sup>42</sup> Dobratz, B.A. & Buzzell, T. & Waldner, L.K. *Power, Politics, and Society: An Introduction to Political Sociology*. Routledge. New York. (2015)

Right-wing political parties and movements are trying to organize locally and nationally, and to influence local and national politics. Although groups with neo-Nazi labels are often controlled by the security system, they adapt to these conditions and work in secret against the law. Political groups may over time transform from neo-Nazi to more moderate right-wing radical parties. Paramilitary groups are increasingly formed and are often allied with political movements and parties in Central and Eastern Europe. In Poland and Slovakia, these paramilitary forces were formed in the style of the Hungarian Guard, which was disbanded by the Budapest Tribunal in 2009. Such civilian militias claim that their function is to defend the civilian population in the absence of government. This training is conducted by small groups of about 10 to 17 people, as an informal social activity in the camps. An example of this is the Slovak Paramilitary Group formed in 2012, which numbered around 200 members, whose key activities were military training combined with pan-Slavic and pro-Russian ideological indoctrination.<sup>43</sup>

- Nativist, Identitarian, and anti-Islamic movements.

This category belongs within the European far-right, broadly based on preserving ethnic and cultural identity and opposing immigration and multiculturalism. They thus advocate for the protection of Western and national values by their enemies and infiltrators, including asylum seekers, Islamists, multiculturalism, and all those who support them. Identitarian movements with roots in France later appear in the Netherlands, Germany and the Nordic countries. Anti-Islamic movements have largely gained momentum following the September 11 terrorist attacks, and are internationally supported in Europe and North America. Prominent anti-Islamic ideologues such as Pamela Gellar and Robert Spencer are involved in cross-border dialogue and partnerships with European groups such as "Stop Islamizing Europe".<sup>44</sup>

These are different categories with different meanings. They are ideologically connected, with overlaps between them, often regarding personal relationships and belonging to different groups. This typology represents the sum of the actors falling under the term far right. Together they form the core of extremism, fueled by the complex infrastructure (history, socio-economic context, public opinion and politics) that contributes to its expansion.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The far right is made up of individuals or groups who believe in the following ideals: they are a fiercely nationalist, anti-globalization movement opposed to the central government, advocating individual freedom (especially their right to own weapons, to be tax-exempt), in conspiracy theories that involve a serious threat to national sovereignty and personal freedom, and believe that personal and national "lifestyles" are endangered or already lost. For them, the threat is real and unavoidable and comes from a specific ethnic, racial or religious group. They believe in the need to be prepared for attack by participating in paramilitary formations where they prepare and train.

In relation to the future development of the proposed typology, the various actors should be studied independently. Therefore, these theories need to be further developed. Right wing terrorists do not want publicity as is the case with traditional terrorist organizations. In their case, a terrorist attack can successfully generate fear and terror within the target group without anyone taking responsibility. Right-wing political violence can also be hate crime and terrorism. This implies that terrorist violence is an inherent part of right-wing extremist ideology, and perpetrators do not need publicity and public explanation for their acts of violence.

This suggests that the intention and nature of right-wing terrorist attacks can be interpreted as unplanned, unpredictable and spontaneous or isolated incidents. But the reality is quite different. Right wing terrorism is a very dangerous form of political violence and a serious threat. Their tactical goal is to influence the surrounding states, to minimize repression and countermeasures, and to win the long war against democratic societies and foreign settlers on a strategic level.

The massive influx of refugees poses a potential risk to Western democratic societies because of the spread of anti-immigration, right-wing, populist mass movements throughout Europe. These movements, organized into small militant groups, show a constant process of radicalization and use of violence against government officials and minorities, while using explosives and other forms of terrorist tactics.

According to the analysis of the attacks, security agencies face a spontaneous and rarely planned threat, often violent and with deadly consequences. The most common targets are refugee homes, mosques, police or left-wing activists. The perpetrators are individuals or small organized groups, with no prior criminal records, or even a record of involvement in organized far-right groups. Finally we can conclude that:

-Right wing terrorism is a unique form of political violence with undefined boundaries between hate crime and terrorism. In general, right wing terrorism is not intended to carry out high-impact individual and group attacks, but

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<sup>43</sup> Mesežnikov, G. & Bránik, R. *Hatred, violence and comprehensive military training*. Political Capital. Budapest. (2017)

<sup>44</sup> Toğuşlu, E. & Leman, J. & Sezgin, I.M. *New Multicultural Identities in Europe: Religion and Ethnicity in Secular Societies*. Leuven University Press. Belgium. (2014)

rather aims at strategic long-term, low-intensity "warfare" against their enemies. Only the effects of creating terror and fear on their target group are similar to other forms of terrorism.

-The tactics of individual actors have declined in recent years, although they are still present in militant right wing organizations. In Europe, there is a sort of large-scale collective terrorist campaign carried out by far-right, anti-immigration and anti-government movements, with peripheral involvement of organized militant right-wing organizations.

-The security services had a major problem in overcoming the threat. The measures taken to detect structures and monitor communications before the start of an event have no effect. Persons involved in these violent acts rarely have a criminal record and are unrelated to a particular extremist movement. Small groups are formed spontaneously during certain events such as rallies and protests, and terrorist attacks are also carried out during that time.

- Right-wing extremist and terrorist activities through their organized violence can cause conflict with the opposing party. An example of this is the continuing violent clashes between right-wing populists and the Salafists in Germany, which have led to further radicalization on both sides.

Right-wing terrorism or racist political violence remains one of the most dangerous threats to Western democracies, especially as these extremist groups have developed and used violent tactics designed to be neglected and misinterpreted by security agencies. White supremacists, neo-Nazis and other right-wing extremist groups operate in a widespread non-traditional form, which is still a major problem for the security services.

Extreme right-wing violence directly endangers the foundations of a democratic culture: pluralism and tolerance. This form of violence instills fear in its victims, and denies the monopoly of force established by the rule of law. This means that even if it is not legally classified as "terrorism", extreme right wing violence can have long-term negative effects on democratic societies.

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