Fluctuating waves of right-wing extremist violence in Western Europe

The nature, severity and scope of the threat of right-wing extremist violence in Western Europe, including the Netherlands

Contents

Introduction

Since the first Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands was released in 2005, the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) has published information on the threat of right-wing extremist violence. In doing so, the NCTV has adopted a broad perspective of all threat-related developments that could potentially lead to terrorist violence. Both history and current events show that terrorist violence is not limited to jihadism, and the National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020 also outlines the specific attention devoted to right-wing extremism by the NCTV.[1] In the general perception, however, right-wing extremism is often eclipsed by jihadism. This is understandable to a large degree, as the threat of jihadist violence (in the Netherlands at least) has played a major role in determining our perceptions of the terrorist threat. For this reason, in recent years, the NCTV has published a range of phenomenological studies in the field of jihadism (such as the 2017 'The Children of ISIS' report). New domestic and international events and developments in the sphere of right-wing extremism and terrorism have also increased the relevance of the phenomenon in threat assessments. In 2016, one terrorist attack took place in the Netherlands. Rather than a jihadist attack, it was an attack on a mosque in Enschede motivated by xenophobic and anti-Islamist sentiments. An incendiary bomb was thrown at the mosque while various attendants were present. The fire was quickly extinguished, and there were ultimately no injuries or fatalities. During their criminal proceedings, the five perpetrators stated that they wished to force the municipal authorities not to build a new asylum seekers' centre in Enschede, and that this was the reason for this act of violence. Furthermore, in August 2018, a 43-year-old man from Doornenburg was arrested for planning a violent crime of a terrorist nature against Muslims. The Public Prosecution Service stated that he had no concrete plans yet, however.

As mentioned earlier in the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands, there has been increasing concern regarding threats of right-wing terrorist violence at an international level as well. The 2011 attacks by Anders Breivik in Norway, the series of attacks by the National Socialist Underground (NSU) from 2000-2007 in Germany, and the murder of British Labour Parliamentarian Jo Cox (2016) are examples of far-right terrorist attacks in Europe. In 2018, new arrests were made of members of right-wing terrorist cells across Europe. In June 2018, for example, a French cell was rounded up on suspicion of planning attacks on mosques and imams, in retaliation for earlier jihadist attacks committed in France.[2]

The aforementioned events call for more extensive analysis of right-wing extremist and right-wing terrorist violence within both a national and international context; the scope for such analysis in the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is limited, however. Alongside this research, the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) published the open memorandum titled 'Right-wing extremism in the Netherlands: a phenomenon in motion' (*Rechts-extremisme in Nederland, een fenomeen in beweging*) on right-wing extremist trends in the Netherlands. This publication is used as the primary reference for the backgrounds, modus operandi, and composition of the groups in the Netherlands. The aim of the present NCTV study is to create an understanding of the emergent threat from violent right-wing extremism in Western Europe and its significance for Dutch national security. Here, the national and international field of operations of the extreme right is placed within a broader context, with a primary focus on violence. The primary question is the extent to which right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands constitutes a threat to national security. This is a relevant point, as our country does not exist within a vacuum; broader European social developments also have a presence within our borders, and right-wing extremists often take ideological inspiration from their like-minded counterparts abroad. Even so, the local context of countries will always differ which will influence/result in the various manifestations of right-wing extremism. This study concentrates on the following questions:

1. How has right-wing extremist and terrorist violence occurred in Western Europe since the Second World War, including in the Netherlands?
2. Are there any (conclusive) numeric data on right-wing extremist violence in Western Europe? What can be said about any potential increase or decline within the past five years?
3. What constitutes the substance of contemporary right-wing extremist ideology in Western Europe, and what is the role of violence within that ideology?

1   NCTV, National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020, https://www. NCTV. nl/binaries/CT-strategie%202016-2020_tcm31-80007.pdf, July 2016.

2   Fransen rollen rechtse terreurgroep op [French round up right-wing terrorist group], De Volkskrant, 26 June 2018.

4. How is the violence organised and implemented (modus operandi) and what are the targets?
5. What is the role of the Internet and social media in right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands?
6. Which factors serve to foster violent right-wing extremism in Western Europe?

The conclusion provides an answer to the main question based on the sections preceding it.

Open sources were used to provide a response to these questions, i.e. scientific literature, publications by NGOs, publicly accessible websites, government reports and the NCTV's own insight. Right-wing extremism and terrorist violence by the extreme right can no longer be viewed separately from the online context, where discussions and opinions on social developments and events can serve both as fuel and as a recruitment platform for violence and incitement thereto. Since 2008, the NCTV has been monitoring online phenomena related to terrorism, extremism, radicalisation, and polarisation. Combined with a literature study, many of these findings have been incorporated into the section examining the role of the Internet and social media in right-wing extremist violence. International research on right-wing extremist violence has caught up in recent years. Following an initial resurgence in the 1990s, international interest in the subject diminished. The academic community did retain a focus on right-wing populism from a European perspective, however. The Breivik attack in 2011 and the NSU attacks seem to have sparked renewed academic interest in the subject. These scholarly insights also constitute a reference source for this document.

Scope

Given the NCTV's primary duty to help research and combat the threat of politically motivated violence, this document concentrates on the threat of violence from right-wing extremism and right-wing terrorism. The threat of non-violent activities conducted by right-wing extremists should not be underestimated, however. On the contrary, right-wing extremists generating hate towards minorities, the rule of law, and democracy on a systematic basis can also pose a (potentially long-term) non-violent threat to national security. It can undermine the democratic legal order, and have a disruptive and subversive effect. In order to limit the scope of this publication, the focus will be on the threat posed by violence. The previous AIVD publication also devoted express attention to the non-violent threat from the extreme right. Ultranationalism among various migrant groups in Europe, such as the Turkish Grey Wolves, also falls outside the scope of the present document. Although this latter group is active in Europe (including in the Netherlands) and qualifies as right-wing extremist (which is why the organisation is monitored by the authorities), the ideology and nature of their activities is too specific in relation to the main

developments in Western-European right-wing extremism.[3] The defined scope of this study is also limited to Western-European countries; although there are very relevant developments in right-wing extremism in countries such as Hungary and Russia, their domestic political context differs significantly from that in Western Europe, and is of a different nature than the problems discussed here.

Structure

This study first sketches the international developments in right-wing extremism, and then concentrates on the Dutch context and how the threat in the Netherlands relates to these international developments. The brief intermediary discussions provide a more broad-strokes analysis.

Definitions

The definitions below apply to the following commonly used terms in this document. It should be noted that, in reality, journalism, academia and the security sector all define the phenomena in various different ways. The definitions below nonetheless attempt to correspond as closely as possible to those used in scholarly and journalistic practice.

Extremism is a phenomenon involving people or groups who, motivated by ideologies, are willing to commit serious l violations of the law or carry out other activities that undermine the democratic legal order.

Terrorism is the ideologically motivated threat, preparation or use of serious violence against human beings or against material property in an attempt to destabilise society, to strike fear into the hearts of the population or influence political decision-making.

Extreme-right activism is a form of activism involving radical concepts such as xenophobia, hatred towards people or foreign cultural elements or ultranationalism, but which does not break the law or seek to destabilise the democratic legal order.

Right-wing extremism is a form of extremism focusing on one or more of the following concepts: xenophobia, hatred of foreign cultural or other elements or ultranationalism.

Right-wing extremist violence is physical violence against human beings or objects (including vandalism or destruction) motivated by xenophobia, a hatred of foreign cultural elements or ultranationalism.

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3   For the purposes of this document, 'Western-European countries' are defined as those that, until 1989, were not part of the Warsaw Pact. The countries in the former Yugoslavia are also left out of this study.

1. Right-wing extremist and terrorist violence in Western Europe after the Second World War

Not a new phenomenon

Since 1945, most Western-European countries have had to deal with serious violence from right-wing extremists in some form or other. Many of these events have faded to the background of European history, but exceptions include the right-wing terrorist attack on Oktoberfest in Munich in 1980 carried out by right-wing extremist Gundolf Köhler (with the possible involvement of a larger organisation) and the attack on the train station in Bologna in 1980, for which the right-wing terrorist organisation Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari is held responsible. In the above attacks, 13 and 85 people lost their lives (respectively).

Consulting a number of historical databases (including the TWEED database[4]) clearly shows which countries have had to deal with the largest amount of right-wing terrorist violence since the Second World War. From 1950-2004, three countries stand out clearly in this respect: Italy (89 attacks and 162 deaths), France (262 attacks and 89 deaths) and Germany (267 attacks and 51 deaths). The differences between the numbers of right-wing terrorist attacks in various European countries are quite striking – the Netherlands is at the bottom of the list, for example, with only a single attack between 1950 and 2004, just behind Sweden (three attacks) and Norway (two attacks). Researchers group this data into three waves of right-wing terrorist violence: France in the 1960s, Italy in the 1970s and Germany in the 1990s.[5] In these countries, terrorist organisations were responsible for the attacks to a large extent. The groups had a strongly hierarchical structure, and elements of the military elite were often involved, with the intention of establishing authoritarian regimes and neutralising left-wing opposition. The groups were professionally organised, were sometimes several hundred members strong and in some cases maintained contacts with terrorist organisations abroad.

Table 1 **Victims of right-wing terrorist violence in Western Europe, 1950-2004**

Country	Fatalities (injuries)	Attacks
Italy	162 (772)	89
France	89 (303)	262
(West) Germany	51 (267)	133
Spain	15 (56)	36
Belgium	7 (3)	12
Portugal	5 (4)	11
Austria	4 (4)	14
Switzerland	3 (5)	9
United Kingdom	2 (115)	10
Greece	1 (81)	65
Norway	1 (0)	2
Sweden	0 (4)	3
Denmark	0 (0)	1
The Netherlands	0 (0)	1

4   Terrorism in Western Europe: Events Data (TWEED), http://folk.uib.no/sspje/tweed.htm

5   Koehler, 'Right wing extremism and terrorism in Europe: Current developments and issues for the future', in: *Prism* 6, no. 2, 2016.

During the last few years of the Algerian Civil War (1954-1962), the infamous French ultranationalist Organisation de l'Armee Sécrete (Secret Army Organisation, OAS), which fought for Algerian independence, made serious attempts at violence against French government targets.[6] There were various unsuccessful attempts to assassinate French President De Gaulle, for example. After the ringleaders were arrested and Algeria ultimately won its independence in 1962, the organisation's activities ceased. Various right-wing terrorist groups were active in Italy from the 1960s to the 1980s (the Cold War years), whose principal aim was to reduce support for communist parties and groups. As the Red Brigade terrorists were also active at this time, one striking aspect of this period were the attacks on civilian targets, which were subsequently framed as the actions of left-wing extremist groups, so-called 'false-flag' operations. During these 'Years of Lead' (1969-1985), over 15,000 attacks were carried out in Italy by parties on both sides of the political spectrum, resulting in over 400 fatalities.[7]

During the 1980s, the most violent of the German groups was the Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann, which was inspired by the Nazi paramilitary Sturmabteilung (SA) detachment and pursued the introduction (or re-introduction) of an authoritarian regime in West Germany. Due to new research, in addition to other crimes, the organisation is now also held responsible for the above-mentioned attack on Oktoberfest in 1980.[8] For a long time, the German authorities had surmised that the right-wing extremist and 'lone actor' Gundolf Köhler had prepared and executed the attack independently.

From organisations to a range of actors

Clear shifts took place in European right-wing extremism after the 1980s. The Cold War was at an end, as a result of which many domestic and international tensions with communist groups had dissipated, and with them the *raison d'être* of the corresponding well-organised groups in the countries mentioned above. This did not spell the end of right-wing extremism in Western Europe, however. From the seventies into the eighties, animosity towards migrants (who had been moving into Western Europe since the sixties due to decolonisation and labour migration) became the main preoccupation of right-wing extremist circles. These years were characterised particularly by subcultural groups, dominated by the ultra-violent, extreme-right skinhead culture. The original skinheads, who emerged in the United Kingdom in the late sixties as a youth counter-movement from the working classes, were apolitical and focused mainly on ska music. British skinhead

culture changed drastically in the late seventies, however, when the British right-wing extremist National Front party proved able to infiltrate the movement by means such as recruitment among violent football fans.[9]

Ultimately, a large part of the skinhead movement transformed into a racist and violent subculture that crossed over from the UK to other Western-European countries. New, often Anglo-Saxon groups such as Blood & Honour (founded in 1987) and Combat 18 gained a presence in various countries in Europe. On the streets, violent acts against ethnic minorities, Jewish targets, homosexuals, and extreme left-wing activists became increasingly common. The skinheads constituted a vastly different operating body than the aforementioned semi-professional organisations from the sixties and seventies. During this time, violence was often committed spontaneously and without any coordinated preparation, often under the influence of drugs and alcohol. This wave of right-wing extremist violence reached its zenith in most European countries at the start of the nineties, and began to ebb away once more at the start of this century.[10]

Violent lone actors have played an important part in the history, especially more recently, of international right-wing extremism. The USA gave birth to the notion of *leaderless resistance*, which was fleshed out more extensively in the 1980s by Ku Klux Klan leader Louis Beam, spurring on individuals to commit violent or other acts separately as 'lone wolves'.[11] Beam believed that organisational links could be more easily detected, infiltrated, and neutralised by the government, whereas lone actors could achieve the same destabilising effect while easily operating 'under the radar'. The Norwegian Anders Breivik, responsible for 77 deaths with his attacks in Oslo and Utøya in 2011, and the Englishman David Copeland, who preceded him by committing three bomb attacks in the United Kingdom in 1999, are notorious examples of lone actors in Europe. (See the section on modus operandi).

Right-wing extremism in the Netherlands: A historical perspective

Political context: Shifting themes

During the twenty years after the Second World War, right-wing extremism in the Netherlands was shaped to a large extent by former Nazi collaborators from the war. In part, they were concerned with rehabilitation. A small number also wished to

6 Most of the violence was perpetrated by the OAS in Algeria. Violence was directed both at the French and at Algerian citizens in favour of Algerian independence.

7 'Italië's jaren van lood' [Italy's Years of Lead], *NRC Handelsblad*, 21 March 2002.

8 'Oktoberfest bomb inquiry: Severed hand may prove 1980 attack was carried out by neo-Nazis and not a lone wolf', *Independent*, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/oktoberfest-bomb-inquiry-severed-hand-may-prove-1980-attack-was-carried-out-by-neo-nazis-and-not-a-10024250.html

9 'How Skinheads Transformed From Inclusive Youth Movement Into Racist Hate Group', http://allthatsinteresting.com/skinheads-history, 7 March 2017.

10 T. Bjørgo, *Racist and right wing violence in Scandinavia: patterns, perpetrators, and responses.* Oslo, 1997.

11 The term 'lone wolf' is being used less and less by both the government and the academic community. The term carries a romantic connotation, and is usually employed by the perpetrators themselves. The more neutral and objective 'lone actor terrorist' is a more adequate term.

revive national socialism within the Dutch political landscape.[12] In the 1970s, the focus shifted: the influx of labour migrants (first from Spain and Italy, later from Turkey and Morocco) and associated tensions in some locations caused the focus of right-wing extremist groups to change. The Dutch Peoples-Union (Nederlandse Volks-Unie, NVU) was the first party to target migrants specifically (especially the arrival of large numbers from Suriname from 1975), while retaining its traditional neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic leanings.[13] In addition to political activities, some members of the party (a few of whom had a collaborationist past) were still involved in individual acts of violence against migrants.[14] The political influence of the NVU remained limited, however, and the party never succeeded in winning a seat on a Dutch municipal council. There were a number of additional right-wing extremist groups that, rather than being anti-Semitic like the NVU, were more xenophobic and ultranationalist. The late seventies also saw the inception of Voorpost, a group that worked in conjunction with its Flemish counterpart towards the unification of Flanders and the Netherlands.[15] In the 1980s, the Dutch Youth Front was also founded (Jongerenfront Nederland or JFN, a splinter group from the NVU), which has been connected with a bomb attack on a Turkish coffee house in Schiedam in 1986.
The group was dissolved by its founder following a court ruling in the 1990s.

Popular concerns among right-wing extremists were translated into the political sphere in the 1980s by the rise of the Centre Party (Centrumpartij) under the leadership of Hans Janmaat, and later his Centre Democrats (Centrumdemocraten, CD). An aversion to migrants and multicultural society were the key items on the party agenda. It won seats in the House of Representatives, but also met with strong political and social opposition. In the mid-1990s, the party went into strong decline, and it disappeared from the House in 1998. CP'86 was viewed as the successor of the CD, but it never succeeded in winning any seats. At the start of this century, aversion to migrants and multicultural society reappeared on the political agenda, with the arrival of the Pim Fortuyn List party (Lijst Pim Fortuyn, LPF).

Data on right-wing extremist violence was for a long time lacking

It is difficult to provide a historic overview of the scope of right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands. Prior to the nineties, no consistent records were kept. Until the 1980s, extreme-right and racist violence was not expressly monitored by the government, media, or academic circles. Since 1996, the Monitor by the Leiden University Anne Frank Foundation (later run by the Verwey-Jonker Institute) has reported on right-wing extremist developments, including figures on right-wing extremist violence. Their reports were initially based in part on information from the National Security Service (BVD), and later on police data. The authors repeatedly stressed that, although the Monitor did provide an increased understanding of the extreme right, the improved record-keeping still had some shortcomings. Some police districts barely issued any reports and incidents were not always reported by victims, so prevalence may have been under-reported in the Monitor.[16] Cases of racism are sometimes classified differently – although the police may view a swastika plastered on a migrant's home as vandalism, the victim may see it as a threat. These factors mean that the data is not 100% reliable. Starting in the early nineties, the BVD (predecessor of the AIVD) also included the phenomenon in its annual reports; later, the organisation released phenomenological studies on the subject. Until that time, there were precious few reports and little to no available data. Researchers Jaap van Donselaar encountered the lacking data when he started compiling his Extreme Right Monitor, as did and Rob Witte when writing his history of 'racist violence' in the Netherlands.[17]

Witte stresses that racist violence was certainly committed in the Netherlands from the fifties and sixties onwards, but that it was long trivialised by the government. Witte cites ethnic tensions and, in some cases, violent acts between migrant groups and native Dutch groups in the 1950s and 1960s as examples of racist violence. There were also several instances of anti-Semitic violence after the war, as demonstrated by (among other things) the destruction of thousands of Jewish graves in the southern and eastern parts of the Netherlands during September-November of 1966. According to Van Donselaar, however, right-wing extremist violence was only an incidental phenomenon until the seventies,[18] after which it began to change. This was explained by the fact that the Netherlands was clearly becoming an immigration country during this period, and the presence of ethnic minorities was taking on a more permanent

12   W. Wagenaar, *Factsheet extreemrechts in Nederlandse gemeentes* [Factsheet on the extreme right in Dutch municipalities], May 2018, p. 10.

13   Ibid.

14   'Een verdere afkalving van extreemrechtse partijen, maar ook: een toename van gewelddadige incidenten' [Further decline of extreme right-wing parties, but also an increase in violent incidents], https://web.annefrank.org/nl/ Educatie/monitor/Monitor-racisme/Toename-van-racistisch-geweld/. On the publication of the third racism and extreme-right monitor, 2000.

15   The Greater Netherlands movement took shape mainly during the 1920s, outside the circles of the extreme right. Professor of History Pieter Geyl (raised in a socio-democratic family) proposed that the reunification of the Dutch-speaking territories was appropriate to the Dutch national character.

16   'Een verdere afkalving van extreemrechtse partijen, maar ook: een toename van gewelddadige incidenten' [Further decline of extreme right-wing parties, but also an increase in violent incidents]. http://web.annefrank.org/nl/ Educatie/monitor/Monitor-racisme/Toename-van-racistisch-geweld/

17   R. Witte. *'Al eeuwen lang een gastvrij volk', racistisch geweld en overheidsreacties in Nederland 1950-2009* ['A welcoming people throughout the centuries': Racist violence and government responses in the Netherlands 1950-2009], Amsterdam 2010.

18   *Monitor Racisme en extreemrechts* [Monitor of Racism and the Extreme Right], fifth report, 2002, p. 7

character.[19] Violent crime rates in general also increased during this period.

Witte notes that, during the eighties, right-wing extremist violence became galvanised and increased in scope. Partly due to the political rise of extreme right-wing parties (such as the Centre Party, and later the Centre Democrats), the extreme right was high up on the social agenda for the first time. The extreme-right skinhead culture from the UK had also taken root among some youths in the Netherlands (albeit to a lesser extent than in the neighbouring countries).[20] Skinheads showed only limited organisation, and the phenomenon more closely resembled an extreme-right youth subculture. Nevertheless, it resulted in violence, often committed under the influence of drugs and alcohol. The murder of Dutch-Antillean Kerwin Duijnmeyer in 1983 by a sixteen-year-old skinhead was (and still is) regarded by many as the first racist murder since the Second World War. Yet the court ruled that it could not be determined whether the perpetrator, who stabbed Duijnmeyer following an altercation at a snack bar, was motivated by racism to any significant extent.

In the early nineties, the Netherlands experienced a spike in acts of racist violence.[21] Small activist groups operating at local level were responsible for most violence during this period. Skinheads became increasingly supplanted by the emerging 'gabber' culture, parts of which were undergoing extreme-right radicalisation. Various mosques were set ablaze (including in Amersfoort in January 1992), asylum seekers' centres experienced bomb threats and threatening pamphlets were distributed. The mid-1980s saw the emergence of an increasing number of organisations that committed illegal acts. Members of Centrumpartij'86 (Centre Party 86, or CP'86), some of whom were members of the Autonomous National Socialists (ANS), committed acts of intimidation against political opponents, particularly members of Green Left (GroenLinks). Racist incidents in newly-reunited Germany increased and there were concerns at that time that the Netherlands would experience a similar rise in violent acts. Although the severity and scope never reached the German level, racist and right-wing extremist violence in the second half of the nineties did gradually increase. According to the various Monitors, cases of racist and right-wing extremist violence increased from 122 in 1995 to 406 in 2000 (see Table 2).[22] These cases involved

vandalism, threats, bomb threats, confrontations, destruction of property, arson, bomb attacks, abuse, and manslaughter. The actual involvement of extreme-right groups in this violence could generally not be clearly established and was often indirect.[23] Indications of the acts genuinely being sanctioned or organised by an extreme-right group were rare.

Surprisingly enough, the level of right-wing extremist violence dropped in 2001 (the year of the jihadist 'September 11' attacks), despite the various subsequent acts of arson committed in the Netherlands on mosques and schools. The focus of right-wing extremists did shift at this time, however, particularly following the rise of Pim Fortuyn and the murder of Van Gogh in 2004. Muslims and Islam – which were also hot topics in mainstream politics – went to the top of the extreme-right political agenda. Most growth in the movement during the mid-2000s took place among the 'Lonsdale Youths', who emerged from the 'gabber' subculture. Although this youth culture had a broad presence, there was very little in the way of formal organisation at the national level. At the time, the AIVD concluded that xenophobia, nationalism, and frustration were common feelings among this group, despite a general lack of subscription to right-wing extremist ideology.[24] These elements were primarily at the basis of violent or other confrontations with those of non-western ethnic minority backgrounds at schools and in the nightlife of small cities, where aggression often came from both sides. Had they continued, these public disturbances would have destabilised social cohesion and constituted a threat to the democratic legal order. However, things never got that far, as the Lonsdale Youth movement diminished rapidly at the end of the decade, ushering in a period of relative decline in right-wing extremism in the Netherlands.

Table 2   **Acts of racist and right-wing extremist violence in 1995-2002, Source: Racism and Right-wing Extremist Monitor, Anne Frank Foundation**

Year	Number
1995	122
1996	
1997	298
1998	313
1999	345
2000	406
2001	317
2002	264

19   Monitor 2002, p. 8.

20   'Skinheads, gabbers en Lonsdalejongeren' [Skinheads, Gabbers and Lonsdale Youths], http://web.annefrank.org/ nl/Educatie/monitor/ Kronieken/Kroniek-extreemrechts/ Extreemrechts-in-Nederland/ Skinheads-gabbers-en-Lonsdalejongeren/

21   Witte, *Al eeuwenlang een gastvrij volk* [A welcoming people throughout the centuries], p. 105.

22   'Een verdere afkalving van extreemrechtse partijen, maar ook: een toename van gewelddadige incidenten' [Further decline of extreme right-wing parties, but also an increase in violent incidents], https://web. annefrank.org/nl/ Educatie/monitor/Monitor-racisme/Toename-van-racistisch-geweld/. On the publication of the third racism and extreme-right monitor, 2000.

23   Ibid., p.12.

24   AIVD, '*Lonsdale-jongeren' in Nederland* ['Lonsdale Youths' in the Netherlands], 2006.

Reflection

Right-wing extremist violence occurred in nearly all European countries after the Second World War. What is striking, however, is that the figures in European countries differ wildly and that violence in these countries occurred in waves. Historically, France, Italy, and Germany have had to contend with the largest degree of right-wing terrorist violence. The violence in these countries took place in an extremely specific contextual situation (see the section on 'fertile ground') that was not present in other countries. France had to contend with very specific tensions regarding Algeria during the 1960s. During the 1970s, Italy experienced a major national divide between communists and extreme right groups, while Germany faced persistent post-war right-wing extremism, further compounded by tensions surrounding reunification in the early nineties. The shift that took place from predominantly violent organisations in the fifties and sixties, via an increased focus on subcultural groups in the eighties, to small cells and lone actors in the period thereafter is noteworthy.

There have been no right-wing terrorist organisations in Dutch history. Nevertheless, the Netherlands has experienced right-wing extremist violence that has intensified since the seventies, as convincingly demonstrated in the publications by Witte, Van Donselaar, and Wagenaar. The problem is that the scope of right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands before 1996 is difficult to quantify. Even after improvements to and the professionalisation of data-collection and incident reporting, providing a reliable scope remains problematic due to the potential level of under-reporting. Despite this, longitudinal research as part of the Racism and Extreme Right Monitor showed that the scope of violence was quite significant from 1995-2002, with an average of 295 violent acts per year. In this sense, the Netherlands was part of a wave of right-wing extremist violence that also took place in other European countries at the same time. The image presented on occasion by the media in recent times (i.e. that the Netherlands responded less violently to asylum seekers in the 1990s than to the present wave) does not prove entirely correct. Right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands was relatively disorganised, and was often committed 'spontaneously'. In many cases, the violent acts could not be traced back to extreme right organisations; rather, their involvement was indirect. Due to its local and disorganised character, right-wing extremist violence was rarely viewed as a national problem, or as a threat to national security. Looking back, it is uncertain whether this view was justified. The question remains, after all, as to whether right-wing extremist violence is less serious or has less impact on victims than right-wing extremist attacks committed by organised groups.

Looking at the preferred targets of right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands, it is noticeable that they have shifted over time, and that the different targets were chosen to suit new enemy stereotypes. In the 1960s, violence was primarily directed at labour immigrants from Italy and Spain. In the 1970s, violence concentrated more on Dutch citizens of Turkish and Moroccan descent, and in the 1980s on asylum seekers. In the 1990s and the 21st century, mosques and Islamic objects have been the primary target of violent acts. What stands out is that, throughout the twentieth century and into this century, Jewish persons and objects have remained targets of right-wing extremist violence. Many right-wing extremist groups and individuals had (and often still have) an anti-Semitic bent, although it has been less publicly visible in parts of the extreme right movement in recent years.

2. The current severity and scope of right-wing extremist violence in Western Europe

International reports send mixed messages

In order to gain an understanding of right-wing terrorist and extremist violence in Western Europe, the annual Europol TE-SAT (Terrorism Situation and Trend) report has been an important source of information since 2006. The national police services all report to Europol on jihadist, separatist, and left and right-wing extremist attacks, and on the developments from their respective countries. The Europol data on right-wing terrorist violence mainly presents a fluctuating image, with a peak in attacks in the year 2015 (see Table 2). Most of these occurred in France, targeted mosques, and took place shortly after the jihadist attacks on Charlie Hebdo and Bataclan of that year.[25]

According to Europol data, the right-wing terrorist threat has been estimated as 'low' for many years. Although the TE-SAT reports help to gain a general idea of the situation, their use in determining the actual scope of right-wing terrorism and extremist violence is problematic. One significant hurdle in interpreting the report is the reporting method itself, as the definition of 'right-wing terrorist violence' seems to differ between countries. A telling example of this definition problem is offered by the attacks committed by Anders Breivik on 22 July 2011, which Europol did not categorise as right-wing terrorism, and which were therefore not included in that year's report. In its explanation, Europol pointed out that his motivations were influenced by various ideologies.[26] The racist attack by lone actor Casseri on two African market vendors in December 2011 was not categorised as right-wing terrorism either, partly due to the different legal systems in EU Member States, which can also exert influence on the report. Until recently, the United Kingdom (and other countries) often labelled acts of right-wing terrorist violence as 'hate crimes',

a concept unknown to the Dutch legal system. The relevant perpetrators often did not belong to any particular right-wing extremist group, making it difficult to demonstrate any politico-ideological motivation.[27] Although conviction of a hate crime in these cases did often prove feasible in practice, there was a large degree of overlap between hate crimes and terrorism. Hate crimes are criminal acts motivated by a prejudice on the part of the perpetrator against the real or imagined group identity of the victim. Other countries often do not apply the 'terrorism' label unless the perpetrator is part of a recognised group whose aim is to strike fear into the hearts of the population. The fact that many right-wing terrorists operate independently and only partly based on their ideology means that right-wing extremism and terrorism will be under-reported.

Table 3 Right-wing terrorist attacks and arrests in the EU, 2011-2016, Source: Europol (TE-SAT)

Year	Right-wing terrorist attacks	Arrests
2016	1	6
2015	9	12
2014	0	34
2013	0	3
2012	2	10
2011	1	5

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25 Europol, TE-SAT 2016, p. 41.
26 Europol, TE-SAT 2012, p. 4.

27 'Terrorism or hate crime? The contentious politics of a label', *The Irish Times*, 20 June 2017.

Although the above figures for right-wing extremist and terrorist violence until 2016 are not entirely clear, the NCTV has received clear signs over the last three years from international partner organisations that both the severity and scope of right-wing extremist violence in various Western European countries is increasing. Evidence for this comes from the various arrests that have resulted in the discovery of terrorist plots and the prevention of attacks in various European countries, which have also been reported on by the media. In Germany, the threat of right-wing extremism and right-wing terrorism has been present for years. According to official German government data, a total of 75 deaths resulted from right-wing extremist violence between 1990 and 2015; figures from private organisations indicate 184 victims.[28] Serious violence against asylum seekers, Muslims, and left-wing/ other political opponents in particular is a persistent element. It turns out that, for a decade, the German authorities were unable to identify any ideological underpinnings for the NSU murders. These events have led to reforms within the German national security system.

The Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt, BKA) and the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, BfV) state that the threat of right-wing extremist violence has grown in recent years. It culminated during the 2016 refugee crisis, which began around 2014 and reached its zenith in 2016 at 1.6 million asylum seekers. In Germany, the number of right-wing extremist crimes (including violent crimes) rose most significantly in the years 2015 and 2016 (1600 acts of right-wing extremist violence). A striking fact is that, although most acts of violence against asylum seekers in Germany were committed by people with no known links to extreme-right organisations or movements, their motives nonetheless corresponded to those of radical groups.[29] The BfV has also indicated having to contend with right-wing terrorist groups such as the Freitalgruppe (which committed an attack on an asylum seekers' centre) and the Old School Society (a rounded-up cell that had planned attacks on left-wing targets and asylum seekers' centres). As migration into Germany declined after 2016, so too did the number of violent right-wing extremist acts, although the number of incidents remained high. Within the German context, there are also specific concerns regarding increasing violence from the Reichsbürgerbewegung (Reich Citizens' Movement), a movement whose followers do not recognise the current Federal Republic of Germany, but adhere to the borders of the German Reich from before the Second World War. Some factions of this movement harbour strong anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi views, and can therefore be classified as right-wing extremist.

In France, there have long been concerns regarding the violent radicalisation of right-wing extremists in response to the jihadist attacks that France has had to deal with (more so than any other European country). For this reason, there have been fears for some time now that a cycle of violence (cumulative extremism) could emerge there. In July 2016, the then director of the French General Directorate for Internal Security (DGSI), Patrick Calvar, told a committee of the French parliament that he had seen indications that French right-wing extremist groups were arming themselves. He expressed fears of a 'civil war between the extreme right and Islamic elements in France'. Although this vision might seem unrealistic, the last two years have seen the emergence of two right-wing terrorist plots in France: a plot aimed at President Macron was thwarted in 2017, and a group was rounded up in June 2018 that intended to carry out attacks on Muslims. The group, calling itself l'Action des Forces Opérationnelles (AFO), was suspected of targeting radical imams, Islamic ex-detainees, and veiled women, as revenge for jihadist attacks in France.[30] The ten suspects, aged 32-69, were captured in locations spread out across the country.
A website was linked to the group, which intended to 'prepare French civilian soldiers for an armed battle in France'. The war targets the 'servants of the Islamic system' in France, to which Muslims, northern Africans, dhimmis, converts, communists, anarchists and left-wing persons are deemed to belong. The objective is to 'de-Islamify France and effect remigration'.

In 2018, top British counterterrorism chief of police Mark Rowley stated that there is a growing right-wing terrorist threat in the United Kingdom,[31] and that four planned attacks were thwarted in 2017. According to Rowley, there is an increasing level of organisation among right-wing extremist groups and more international collaboration. In this context, he is primarily concerned about the National Action neo-Nazi organisation, which was prohibited in 2016 by national counterterrorism legislation. He also sees many parallels between right-wing extremism and Islamism: both radical movements are intent on sowing division within the communities, and propaganda from both sides aims to influence 'vulnerable persons'. He made reference to the attack by Darren Osborne, who in June 2017 drove his car into a crowd of mosque attendees at the Finsbury Park Mosque in London. His radicalization took place mostly online. The Guardian also reported that JTAC (Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, the British NCTV) is set to conduct an extensive study (the first in the organisation's existence) for the British national security service on the overall threat presented by right-wing extremism.[32]

28   D. Koehler, 'Right wing extremism and terrorism in Europe: Current developments and issues for the future', in: *Prism* 6, no. 2, p. 87.

29   Ibid., p. 95.

30   'Franse inlichtingendienst rolt ultrarechtse terreurgroep op' [French intelligence service captures far-right terrorist group], 25 June 2018, https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/ franse-inlichtingendienst-rolt-ultrarechtse-terreurgroep-op~b0f212c5/

31   'Four far-right plots thwarted last year, says counter-terrorism chief', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/feb/26/ four-far-right-plots-thwarted-last-year-says-counter-terrorism-chief-mark-rowley, 26 February 2018.

32   Koehler, 'Right wing extremism and terrorism in Europe: Current developments and issues for the future', in: *Prism* 6, no. 2, p. 87.

Academic insights

Various conclusions can be drawn from the lack of unambiguous academic data. Ravndal (cited above), who completed his dissertation in 2017 with three studies on right-wing terrorism in Europe, posits that there are two extremes in the characterisation of the threat of right-wing terrorist violence. Police and intelligence services have a tendency to minimise the right-wing terrorist threat, while anti-racist and lobbying/interest groups do just the opposite, and consistently exaggerate the threat.[33] To generate clarity, he studied open sources and created a dataset of acts of right-wing extremist violence targeting people in Western Europe between 1990 and 2015.[34] He arrived at 578 acts of right-wing extremist violence resulting in a total of 303 fatalities.[35] One striking conclusion based on his dataset is that the number of fatal attacks by right-wing extremists in Western Europe has declined since 1990. Ravndal believes that these are surprising results, given the climate in Western Europe over the past decade, which many consider to be fertile ground for right-wing extremism, namely: increased migration, growing support for right-wing populist parties, jihadist terrorism, and high youth unemployment. He uses a number of hypotheses to explain the drop in fatal attacks: less youth activism in general, online activism replacing street demonstrations among politically engaged youths, less crime overall, and youths becoming acclimatised to multicultural society. He stresses that these hypotheses require further academic research.

Another prominent researcher in the field, Daniel Koehler, stresses that all statistics on right-wing extremist violence point to an increase in right-wing extremist/terrorist violence in Western Europe, emphasising the major influence of jihadist attacks in Western Europe and the swell in migration.[36] When it comes to asylum seekers, the goal of right-wing extremists according to Koehler is two-pronged. Their purpose is a) to make clear that asylum seekers are not welcome and should leave and b) to pressure authorities into curbing the influx of asylum seekers. He highlights the correlation with jihadist attacks using (among others) the 281% increase in acts of right-wing extremist violence against Muslims following the attacks on Charlie Hebdo in 2015.[37]

This phenomenon had occurred earlier in the UK following the attacks in London (2005) and in the Netherlands after the murder of Van Gogh (2004). The lack of any right-wing extremist violence following the jihadist attacks in Belgium is also noteworthy. Still, there are concerns there as well regarding the radicalisation of and potential use of violence by right-wing extremist civic guards (see Section 4) and the rise of new groups, such as the Schild & Vrienden (Schild & Friends) youth movement.[38] The latter group preaches physical, armed preparation for a civil war (see Section 3).[39]

The Netherlands

Highest number of violent acts during refugee crisis

The figures from the Report on Racism, Anti-Semitism and Right-wing Extremist Violence (hereinafter: the Monitor) in recent years have shown that the number of violent acts has risen sharply since 2014, from 17 in 2013 to 42 in 2014, 38 in 2015, and 45 in 2016 (Section 3 takes a closer look at the targets and modus operandi).[40] These acts included vandalism, threats, confrontation destruction of property, arson, and physical abuse. Strictly speaking, most of these violent acts are viewed as extremism and not as terrorism, since the violence is not aimed at taking human lives. A stubborn limitation (and one that was also present in the eighties and nineties) is the fact that many of the perpetrators are never identified, making it impossible to ascertain their identity and precise background. In these cases, the racist and right-wing extremist motives are derived from the context, making it difficult to determine whether the perpetrators are part of a larger organisation or act in smaller, non-organised groups, or independently. To a large extent, the rise in the number of violent acts in recent years would seem to be linked to the public outcry in Europe and the Netherlands following the arrival and intake of asylum seekers, especially since the latter half of 2015. The arrival of 56,900 initial and subsequent asylum seekers in 2015 was double the figure from the previous year; never before had the Netherlands received so many asylum seekers within such a short time.[41] This led to extremely polarised political and social debates, where the opposition between Dutch groups was even greater than during the previous major migration influx in the nineties. Alongside the socially polarised debate in the autumn of 2016, right-wing extremist violence saw a strong increase. The figures from Wagenaar show that, of the 45 violent incidents in 2016, 26 (58%)

33   Ravndal, 'Right-wing terrorism and violence in Western Europe: introducing the RTV dataset', in: *Perspectives on terrorism*, vol. 10, issue 3, June 2016, p 2.

34   The dataset and codebook can be downloaded from http://www. sv.uio. no/c-rex/rtv.

35   'Right-wing terrorism and violence in Western Europa: introducing the RTV dataset', in: *Perspectives on terrorism*, vol. 10, issue 3, June 2016, p 2.

36   Koehler, 'Right-wing extremism and terrorism in Europe: Current developments and issues for the future', p. 87.

37   M. Mark, 'Anti-Muslim hate crimes have spiked after every major terrorist attack: After Paris, Muslims speak out against Islamophobia', *International Business Times*, 18 November 2015.

38   'Staatsveiligheid waarschuwt voor extreemrechtse burgerwachten: aanslagen zijn niet uit te sluiten' [National Security warns against extreme-right civic guards: possible attacks cannot be excluded], *Het Laatste Nieuws*, https://www.hln.be/nieuws/buitenland/na-waarschuwing-voor-extreemrechtse-burgerwachten-in-belgie-wat-ze-elders-in-europa-uitspookten-als-protest-tegen-vluchtelingen~a44f9c69/ 20 August 2018.

39   NOS, 'België valt over reportage over ultrarechtse jongeren' [Belgium unhappy with report on ultra-right youth], 6 September 2018.

40   *Zesde rapportage racisme, antisemitisme en extreemrechts geweld in Nederland* [Sixth report on Racism, Anti-Semitism and Right-wing Extremist Violence in the Netherlands], December 2017.

41   'In 2015 twee keer zo veel asielzoekers en nareizigers als in 2014' [Numbers of initial and subsequent asylum seekers double from 2014 to 2015], CBS, 19 January 2016, https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2016/04/in-2015-twee-keer-zo-veel-asielzoekers-en-nareizigers-als-in-2014

were related to the acceptance of asylum seekers.[42] As stated, the majority of these acts qualified as extremism, but there was one exception: the Enschede-based Demonstrators Against Municipalities (Demonstranten tegen Gemeenten, DTG), which formed in 2015 as a local group of 'angry citizens' and protested against the planned construction of an asylum seekers' centre, without any of the members having any strong links to right-wing extremism. The group quickly acquired national ambitions, and was joined by people with known right-wing extremist backgrounds. A small group of five from the larger organisation became radicalised and became willing to use violence. They proved willing and able (albeit in an amateur fashion) to use violence against a mosque at a time when people were in attendance. Although nobody was wounded or killed, the court ruled that the crime was arson with terrorist intent. The court found that their aim was to use violence to terrorise the municipality of Enschede and the Muslim community into cancelling the plans for an asylum seekers' centre in the city.[43] This was the first time in Dutch legal history that terrorist intent in an act of right-wing extremist violence had been ruled by a court of law. The intended asylum seekers' centre in Enschede would ultimately never be constructed; as the number of asylum seekers declined at the end of 2016, so too did the need for the centre.

The number of violent right-wing extremist acts plateaued once again during the second half of 2016 after asylum-seeker numbers and the debate subsided.

The strong potential link between right-wing extremist violence and social polarisation on questions of identity is also evident in the debate surrounding 'Black Pete'. The desire to keep Black Pete, as a reaction to efforts by various anti-racist groups who argue that the character should be removed from the Sinterklaas tradition due to racist overtones, was not appropriated by protesting extreme-right groups until relatively late. By doing so, groups such as Voorpost and Pegida are tapping into a feeling of resistance felt across the Netherlands towards accusations of racism or tampering with old traditions. Along with other groups, Voorpost and Pegida join in with counter-demonstrations as activists. There are also right-wing extremist individuals who go one step further, however, and use violence on anti-Black-Pete activists. In recent years, these acts have been most common during the months when the debate flares up (October-December).

42   Sixth Racism Report, 45.

43   Overijssel District Court, ECLI:NL:RBOVE:2016:4137, 27 October 2016.

Table 4. Right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands 2012-2016, Source: Verwey-Jonker Institute.

Category	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Vandalism	1	6	11	16	8
Threats	8	5	13	8	16
Confrontation	2	4	7	8	16
Destruction	1	1	4	4	7
Arson	0	0	0	0	2
Assault	2	1	7	2	5
Total	13	17	42	38	45

Reflection

There is no clear overview of the scope of the suspected growth of violent right-wing extremism and right-wing terrorism. This is partly due to the lack of effective European monitoring of right-wing extremist data, and inconsistency in definitions. In practice, there proves to be considerable overlap between hate crimes and terrorist violence, which obscures the understanding of the threat of right-wing terrorist and extremist violence in Europe. What is striking is that the number of fatal attacks by violent right-wing extremists has dropped since 1990. By contrast, the scope of the right-wing terrorist attack by Breivik was unprecedented in European history. The refugee crisis seems to have catalysed right-wing extremist violence in many Western-European countries, tapping into the long-simmering animosity towards jihadist threats and perceived Islamification. The acts of violence are generally not viewed as right-wing terrorism, however, and are therefore not represented in the Europol figures. Still, the statistics do not provide a complete picture of the threat; over the past year, the chiefs of the German, English, and French intelligence and police services have reported signs of an increased threat of violence. It is concerning that, over the past two years, such examples have been sighted in England and France (which until recently had shown virtually no signs of professional right-wing terrorist cell structures). Although some scholars have reported a new wave of right-wing extremist violence in Europe, there are still no solid figures to support this claim. Germany is an exception in this regard. Compared to these countries, and without trivialising the severity and impact of these violent acts, the scope of right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands can be considered relatively limited. The scope of right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands has decreased since the 1990s (see Section 1), and is centred around violent right-wing extremist acts with strong connections to social debates, in which the extreme right either involves itself or has an interest. The current debate in the Netherlands revolves principally around Islam and Muslims, asylum seekers and Black Pete. This is a key insight in assessing the right-wing extremist threat. It would seem that here, as in Germany, most of those responsible for violent acts (as far as can be determined) have no background in right-wing extremist groups.

Violent radicalisation has thus proven to be possible within a short period outside of this spectrum. No professional terrorist strategies or organisational structures were at play here; the cumulative effect of these smaller attacks can potentially produce similar effects, however. There are no right-wing terrorist organisations or groups active in the Netherlands, and it would seem reasonable to assume that none will emerge in the near future. A lone actor or small group (such as DTG) could conceivably become radicalised within a short time, however, and reach the point of terrorist violence. Although there are no concrete indications for any new initiatives such as these, it is a real possibility, partly in view of the polarised climate. Section 6 examines this prospect in greater detail.

3. Ideological variety in right-wing extremism and the position of violence

The purpose of right-wing extremist ideology

Many publications on extremism and terrorism focus on the importance of the radical ideology involved. Rightly so, as extremist groups model themselves to a large extent (i.e. in their world view, propaganda, internal cohesion and performance of violent/other acts) on the imagery, beliefs and ideas of the relevant ideology. An ideology can be defined as a shared and often normative frame of reference governing a) the interpretation of history and the society in which one lives, b) the view of the world to which one subscribes (the ideal), c) regulation of the interrelationships between like-minded individuals on the one hand and those who think differently on the other and d) actions or behaviour that could/should result in the ideal.[44] In right-wing extremist ideology, right-wing extremists can avail themselves of various items on the social and political agenda, some of which are not immediately obvious, such as the environment or animal rights. The introduction already mentioned that xenophobia, hatred of foreign cultural/other elements and ultranationalism are concepts that are held high within right-wing extremism. These are recurring themes in the four main ideological movements in right-wing extremism presented below.

Over the past decade, however, research has shown that, in several respects, the importance of ideology should be examined in relative terms, even as it affects right-wing extremism. Most such research is empirical, and reveals that many people who join a right-wing extremist group have little to no formulated ideological or political ideas – rather, they merely harbour a primitive animosity towards foreigners.[45] Key reasons for joining violent right-wing extremist groups also include a sense of belonging (comradeship), questions of identity, the availability of alcohol and racist music.

Neo-Nazism: An old starting point

Right-wing extremism in Western Europe has traditionally revolved around the ideology of neo-Nazism, or variations thereon. These ideological views focus on inequality between peoples, determined primarily by biological differences between ethnic groups, in which the fundamental assumption is that of 'white supremacy'. These groups take the national socialist ideology of the NSDAP (1933-1945) as their ideological starting point. Although anti-Semitism has always been a key element of the philosophy, the neo-Nazi movement greatly broadened its focus after the Second World War. Racism, xenophobia, anti-leftist and (from the seventies onwards) anti-migration tendencies became fixed principles of neo-Nazism, and most proponents see violence against ethnic and cultural minorities as justified. In the 1980s, neo-Nazi groups such as Blood & Honour and Combat 18 were characterised by the use of street violence. However, organised and severe violence also came from proponents of this ideology. The NSU terrorist cell is an example of a neo-Nazi group that committed racist murders of nine migrants, mostly of Turkish origin. In Germany and Scandinavia in particular, but also in Eastern and Central Europe (which are outside the scope of this study), there are still right-wing extremist groups who subscribe to this 'classic' right-wing extremist ideology. In the Netherlands, the NVU and groups such as Blood & Honour are descendants from this tradition.

Shift towards culture and identity

Although there are still groups whose 'us against them' mentality is primarily based on neo-Nazi ideas of biological racism, this traditional neo-Nazi ideology seems to have lost its appeal in Western Europe over the past decade. The core, increase and growth potential seem to lie elsewhere. The ideological representations of right-wing extremism have undergone a major shift from the concept of 'race' to that of 'culture'. This metamorphosis took shape mostly at the start of this century, but its intellectual origins are older. As early as the late sixties, the French *nouvelle droite* movement (with Alain de Benoist as its

44   See also: National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb), *Ideologie en strategie van het jihadisme* [Ideology and strategy of jihadism], 2009.

45   T. Bjørgo, 1997, in: 'Radical right-wing movements: who, when, how and why?' Manueala Caiani, *Sociopedia.isa*, 2017.

intellectual leader) strove against multiculturalism and liberal democracy, which (according to them) constituted a threat to the identity of European countries. He did distance himself from Nazism and fascism, however. Under the *nouvelle droite* theory, political change is a product of cultural and social change, and this is where the movement targeted its activities. For a long time, however, it remained a marginal set of ideas confined to radical intellectuals.

In the post-2001 European context, the opposition to Islam and multicultural society became more palpable throughout society, and these issues became the subject of political debate in many European countries. New right-wing extremist groups gave the ideas a more radical spin. This initially took the form of the 'counter-jihad' movement, which became active both online (including on the Gates of Vienna website) and in the physical world (such as the English Defence League in the UK). The followers of this movement believe there is an imminent two-pronged threat, the first being the threat of jihadist terrorism and the second being the 'Islamification of Europe' through trends in migration. Within this ideological space, Islam is viewed as an extremist ideology, one that is alien to European society and irreconcilable with the west. According to this vision, multiculturalism will lead to further Islamification of society, representing the demise of the western-Christian identity of European countries. Contemporary developments are also often positioned along a historic continuum of animosity between Christianity and Islam, stressing that Islam has wished to conquer Europe since the seventh century and that resistance is necessary to halt this development. The name of the 'Gates of Vienna' website is a reference to this resistance. [46]

Although there are no signs of Christian fundamentalism within Western-European right-wing extremism (unlike in the US), and Christianity is viewed predominantly as a cultural element, these groups regard the cultural 'clash of civilisations' as inevitable. European authorities (often considered as elites) are seen as left-wing and weak, and not prepared or able to resist Islamification. [47] They also voice their suspicion of the facilitating role played by certain persons, who in their jargon are referred to as 'cultural Marxists' and who are believed to have determined the social debate after 1968. Conspiracy theories occupy an important place within these beliefs. [48] The 'Eurabia' hypothesis is one such example. This construct, put forward by Bat Ye'or, posits that the European political elite conspired with Arabian leaders during the

seventies in exchange for the supply of oil. [49] According to the theory, this is what allowed extensive migration to Europe from the Middle East, turning Europe into a glorified outpost (Eurabia) of the Arab world. The traditional purpose of these types of conspiracy theories is to clearly establish both internal and external enemies (i.e. traitors and hostile aliens) who together constitute a threat to the group in question. This ideological outlook makes virtually no mention of anti-Semitism – many even view Israel as a bastion in the fight against Islam. This alternative attitude towards Judaism differs considerably from the traditional neo-Nazi movement, which is strongly anti-Semitic. Close collaboration between these two groups is impeded by this divisive element, which sometimes even leads to public internal conflict.

Although the counter-jihadist movement has, in principle, taken a publicly non-violent stance, its relationship with violence is ambiguous nonetheless. Demonstrations by groups such as EDL in England are often accompanied by violence, and it is striking that propaganda often makes reference to the crusades and heroic acts of violence by Christian knights, such as the Knights Templar. Evidence of the potential for counter-jihadist ideas to be coupled expressly with elements of violence is provided by the attacks by Breivik in Norway. Counter-jihadist ideas formed the essence of his manifest titled '2083 – A European declaration of independence', in which he states that his goal was to '[serve] the interests of the free indigenous peoples of Europe and to fight against the ongoing European Jihad.' [50] According to Breivik's philosophy, the use of violence is unavoidable. He viewed his attack as a 'pre-emptive strike', since the 'multiculturalist elite' did not condone democratic opposition. By targeting Utøya, he therefore targeted what he considered to be the future multicultural elite (i.e. the youth branch of the Norwegian social democratic party). Not entirely coincidentally, he presented himself as a member of a group of Knights Templar, which never actually existed. Although Breivik's violent sentiments still find sporadic online resonance, there are no indications that the violence has become an integral component of the counter-jihadist ideology.

A further ideology is propagated by the Identitarian movement, which, although strongly related to counter-jihadism, has a different focus. This movement likewise owes its ideological roots to the *nouvelle droite* and emerged from the Unité Radicale group, which was banned by the French government following an attack by one of its members on French President Jacques Chirac in 2002. [51] A youth movement has been growing from the Bloc Identitaire since 2006, called the *generation identitaire*. In various European countries (including the Netherlands), there are active groups that subscribe to this ideological movement. Unlike counter-jihadism,

46   The name refers to the Siege of Vienna in 1529 and 1683, when Ottoman troops tried unsuccessfully to conquer what was then the capital of the Habsburg Empire. The failed siege of 1683 is regarded as the start of the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

47   A. Kundnani, 'The changing nature of Far-Right Ideologies with Dr. Arun Kundnani', https://icct.nl/event/the-changing-nature-of-far-right-ideologies-with-dr-arun-kundnani/ Retrieved on 27 June 2018.

48   J. Van Buuren, *Doelwit Den Haag? Complotconstructies en systeemhaat in Nederland 2000-2014* [The Hague as a target? Conspiracy constructs and anti-establishment sentiments in the Netherlands]. p. 119.

49   B. Ye'or, *Eurabië, de geheime banden tussen Europa en de Arabische wereld.* [Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis], Amsterdam 2018.

50   *2083*, p. 817.

51   M. Gandilhon, 'Right wing political violence in France: Stock Take and Perspectives', in: M. Taylor, PM Currie, Holbrook, *Extreme right wing political violence and terrorism*, 2013.

these groups reject the 'imperialistic' influence of the United States on Europe in addition to the influence of Islam. In their view, the cultural identity of the various separate European countries should be retained. Within the movement, racialism is held high. This means that, rather than viewing ethnic groups as inferior to indigenous Western Europeans (traditional racism), proponents of racialism perceive irreconcilable differences between peoples. They believe that any successful blending of various ethnicities in a certain area will be at the expense of their own identities, and is therefore undesirable. This school of thought is also characterised by a strong anti-capitalist sentiment and supports direct democracy. In this ideology, violence is not proposed as a means to an end; however, it definitely allows for militant forms of activism that, in some cases, are intimidating and in breach of the law (e.g. occupation of mosques). In the Netherlands, the small group called Identitair Verzet (Identitarian Resistance) adheres to this ideology.

The influence of the alt-right from the United States: A return to biologically-inspired racism

For a long time, the alternative right (alt-right) was a marginal phenomenon in the United States that was mostly limited to the Internet and of minor relevance to Europe. The arrival of Steve Bannon (former director of the alt-right website Breitbart) as White House advisor of the soon-to-become president Donald Trump changed things drastically. The alt-right was originally a catch-all term encompassing various right-wing extremist activities and concepts that were neither coherent nor well-organised. After 2016, however, movement leader Richard Spencer proved able to project a more clear-cut ideological message. The alt-right pursues a white identitarian policy, and strives to create a 'homogeneous white ethnostate'. The ideology is centred mainly in the US in opposition to the cultural identity policy of left-wing politics (including the extreme left) and in its modern form is cast in a positive, humorous tone using memes (see the section on the Internet). Democracy is expressly rejected.[52] Most ideas from the American alt-right movement bear a strong resemblance to traditional European neo-Nazism.

The effect of media coverage of the alt-right phenomenon (and especially the dissemination of alt-right ideas via social media and obscure corners of the internet, such as 4Chan) did not fail to reach Europe. A surprising fact is that well-educated European youths in particular proved susceptible to these messages. Various European groups (such as Erkenbrand in the Netherlands) were established soon after the 2016 American presidential elections, and the demographic decline of the 'white race' fast became the central concern. The group also exhibits a strong aversion to feminism and homosexuality, along with strong anti-Semitic leanings. The attitude to violence on the part of European adherents of the alt-right movement is ambiguous. Thus far, the lowest point in the

American alt-right activities has been the Charlottesville demonstrations in August 2017, which escalated out of control and where a male right-wing extremist drove his car into the demonstrators, causing one fatality.

Race war or civil war

A recurring theme among various right-wing extremists is the notion that a 'race war' is ultimately inevitable. The concept of a civil war is not new among traditional right-wing extremists. The classic idea is the establishment of an authoritarian regime, once the 'white race has achieved victory'.[53] As such, this element resembles other radical ideologies and movements that entertain the notion that violence is necessary in order to create the envisaged national ideal.[54] This concept is further fleshed-out in various publications, including 'The Turner Diaries' by American author William Luther Pierce (from 1978; sometimes also referred to as the 'Bible of right-wing extremism').[55] The members of the NSU read this book and based their actions on it.[56] With his attack, Breivik ultimately also intended to spark a civil war. The Belgian right-wing terrorist group Bloed, Bodem, Eer en Trouw (Blood, Soil, Honour and Loyalty, BBET) that was active in the mid-2000s tried to trigger a civil war by carrying out 'false-flag' attacks: 'Dyab Abou Jahjah (Arab European League) would be slain with a western weapon, and Filip Dewinter (Vlaams Belang, 'Flemish Interest') with an AK-47'.[57] The group's ultimate goal was to produce a national socialist regime. However, its leaders – many of whom had a military background – were arrested and sentenced to a maximum of five years' prison. In recent years, some right-wing extremist groups have moulded this violent vision of a race war into one of a civil war against Muslims and their supposed political allies.

Reflection

Considerable diversity remains within right-wing extremist ideology. The one consistent element is the formation of a clear 'in-group' (as opposed to an 'out group'), defined in ethnic or cultural terms or a combination of both. Recurring themes include xenophobia, hatred of foreign cultural or other elements and ultranationalism. Anti-Semitism is currently a bone of contention within right-wing extremist ideology. After a lengthy period in

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52   G. Hawley, 'The European roots of the alt-right, how far-right ideas are going international', in: *Foreign Affairs*, 22 October 2017 https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2017-10-27/ european-roots-alt-right

53   Even prior to the Second World War, ideas of race wars appeared in the work of Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), among others.

54   Further references include: B. de Graaff, *Op weg naar Armageddon, de evolutie van fanatisme* [En route to Armageddon: The evolution of fanaticism], 2012.

55   D. Koehler, 'Strategies of contention. Right-wing extremism and counter state terror as a threat for western democracies', https://www.sicherheitspolitik-blog.de/2016/03/23/strategies-of-contention-right-wing-extremism-and-counter-state-terror-as-a-threat-for-western-democracies/, 23 March 2016.

56   'Der NSU war nur die Spitze des rechten Terror-Netzwerks' [The NSU was just the tip of the right-wing terrorist network], Vice.com, 26 November 2014.

57   'Vier leden Bloed, Bodem, Eer en Trouw krijgen celstraffen' [Four BBET members receive prison sentences], Nieuwsblad.be, 7 February 2014.

which race took a back seat to culture, this seems to be changing once more. Unlike jihadism, for example, the four main movements within right-wing extremism only sporadically present violence as an integral component of the ideology and as a means of achieving its ends. One possible explanation is that some right-wing extremists wish to present themselves as proponents of law and order. A more likely explanation, however, is that a public declaration in favour of violence would strategically be considered extremely foolhardy, and would quickly result in investigation and prosecution. The question also remains as to whether many right-wing extremists care that much about ideological precepts in practice. In Breivik's case, the ideology proved merely to be a starting point on the path to further serious violent radicalisation. Hate and disgust (and therefore the dehumanisation of the other) are at the core of right-wing extremist ideology; this fact, combined with the disinhibiting effect of hate on violence, means that violence can be an emergent property of right-wing extremist ideologies without needing to be made explicit. Sections of the right-wing extremist spectrum also harbour the notion that a civil war is inevitable, and that preparations are necessary. The hope of triggering such a civil war themselves through their own acts of violence has also been observed among right-wing extremist cells or groups.

4. Organisation, modus operandi and targets

Variety in organisation and composition

First and foremost, it should be stated that not all adherents to right-wing extremist ideologies use violence or are willing to do so. Actual violence occurs only in exceptional cases, as very few see the radicalisation process through to a violent conclusion. Most people who are against democracy or the rule of law will generally express their views in other ways, such as through demonstrations or other forms of activism that convey their ideas in speech and writing. Norwegian researcher Ravndal has created a typology of various actors who do use violence, dividing them into three groups of perpetrators (see Section 1), namely: 1) organisations, 2) subcultural groups and networks and 3) lone actors or very small cells/groups with only a few members. In Europe, there are currently no longer any active large-scale right-wing terrorist organisations (see Section 1). The main form of violence in recent decades has shifted towards small cells and lone actors. Koehler states that, even in Germany, the country with the most right-wing extremist violence, most violent groups have no more than five to nine members.[58] This does not mean, however, that smaller units are less professional by definition; even lone actors (such as Breivik) or smaller cells (such as the NSU) have proven capable of preparing and executing attacks in a professional manner in the long term.

According to the 2017 Europol TE-SAT report, the right-wing extremist movement in Europe suffers from fragmentation, poor leadership, the lack of a consistent organisational structure and personal animosity.[59] At the same time, Europol also acknowledges that serious violence can absolutely come from small cells and groups, and that such activities have increased in various EU Member States. Research has shown that a significant proportion of lone-actor attacks are committed by right-wing extremists. Of the 195 fatalities resulting from lone-actor attacks of various ideological backgrounds in the European Union between 2000 and 2014, 94 were attributable to the acts of lone-actor right-wing extremists (along with 260 injuries).[60] It should be noted, however, that the 77 lives lost in the Breivik attacks constitute a substantial portion of this number. During this period, jihadist lone actors were responsible for 36 attacks, resulting in 27 dead and 65 injured. Research shows that many lone-actor terrorists, including right-wing terrorist lone actors, often have (sometimes severe) psychological conditions.[61] This does not mean that lone actors with mental health conditions cannot have rational motives, however. In many cases, their attacks proved to have been planned with great care.[62]

One concern regarding the composition of several violent extreme-right groups in Europe is the participation of current/former members of the military and police. Apart from the moral issue that their role really should be to support the pillars of democracy, their experience with and access to weapons is a risk factor. In 2007 in the UK, four soldiers were arrested under suspicion of planning terrorist acts and membership of the right-wing National Action terrorist group (established in 2013).[63] This neo-Nazi organisation, originating from the British National Party, was the first right-wing extremist organisation to be banned in the UK in 2017 under terrorist legislation.[64] Germany, too, saw an officer arrested in 2017 (Franco A.) who had planned a false-flag attack together with a student and another soldier. Under the guise of a Syrian asylum seeker, Franco A. had planned an attack on a

58   Koehler, 'Strategies of contention. Right-wing extremism and counter state terror as a threat for western democracies', https://www.sicherheitspolitik-blog.de/2016/03/23/strategies-of-contention-right-wing-extremism-and-counter-state-terror-as-a-threat-for-western-democracies/, 23 March 2016.

59   Europol, *TE-SAT European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017*, p. 45.

60   C. Ellis, R. Pantucci and J. de Roy van Zuijdewijn, E. Bakker, 'Lone-Actor Terrorism Analysis Paper', February 2016, p. 8.

61   See (among others): P. Gill, J. Horgan and P. Deckert, 'Bombing alone: tracing the motivations and antecedent behaviors of lone actor Terrorists', in: *Journal of Forensic Sciences* (2014), p. 425-435.

62   E. Corner, P. Gill, 'A false dichotomy? Mental illness and lone-actor terrorism', in: *Law and Human Behavior*, 39(1), 23-34. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000102, (2015).

63   'Neo-Nazi arrests: Serving British soldiers held over terror offences as alleged members of National Action', *Independent*, 5 September 2017.

64   'Neo-Nazi' arrests: Calls for extremism inquiry after British soldiers are detained on far-right terror charges', *Independent*, 6 September 2017.

politician in order to fuel tensions surrounding this issue in Germany.[65] Then Federal President Joachim Gauck (independent) and Federal Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection Heiko Maas (SPD) were included on Franco's hit list.[66]

Another example of how right-wing extremists can respond to current developments and take on new organisational forms emerged during the refugee crisis. The phenomenon of surveillance groups claiming to represent the security of European citizens crossed over from Scandinavia. Groups such as the Soldiers of Odin proposed that the authorities are unable to protect their native citizens. Although there are relatively few known instances of serious violence involving these surveillance groups and the scope has proven limited, their propaganda can erode the legitimacy of the state nonetheless. Following the murder of a German by several migrants late in the autumn of 2018, right-wing extremists in Chemnitz took advantage of the social unrest, taking the law into their own hands to demonstrate 'who is in charge in the city'.[67]

Various extreme-right and right-wing extremist action groups engage in long-term international collaboration. Members of traditional neo-Nazi groups have been attending each other's meetings for many years, for example, and identitarian groups collaborate within Western Europe. This became apparent in the summer of 2017, when a range of European activists from the 'Defend Europe' extreme-right initiative crowdfunded a boat on the Mediterranean, to prevent NGOs from taking refugees on board. The campaigns enjoyed little success, but had a large media reach. Dutch identitarian groups and individuals supported the initiative, but did not take part themselves. This attitude is typical of the current situation: Dutch right-wing extremists are not leading the way in Europe.

Modus operandi (MO) and selection of targets

The right-wing terrorist attacks discussed above are events with a large-scale media reach, and generate considerable attention and social unease both nationally and internationally. Compared to the less complex acts of violence that take place more frequently, however, these are exceptions. To date, there has only been one complex right-wing terrorist attack involving explosives and firearms: the attack by Anders Breivik. The most violent right-wing extremist acts in the EU are conceptually very simple, and include acts such as physical violence using knives, explosives and weapons, as well as threats and arson. Targets include asylum seekers' centres, mosques, synagogues, left-wing political

headquarters and government property. The targets can be either people or objects. Traditional right-wing extremist targets such as communists and Jews have been replaced over the past decade by Islamic objects, buildings and migrant groups.[68] Recent years have also seen left-wing and, in the eyes of the extremists, pro-migration politicians become the target of right-wing extremist violence.

Various 'false-flag' attacks have been planned by right-wing extremists active in the highest levels of violent activism, examples of which have been given above. The period in which such attacks were carried out most consistently was the Years of Lead in Italy (see Section 1), with the aim of destabilising the state, creating social tensions, increasing polarisation and strengthening the group's internal power base. The most extreme potential scenario was to create chaos in order to pave the way for the installation of an authoritarian regime.

A striking aspect from recent years is the way in which lone-actor right-wing terrorists seem to have adopted an attack method characteristic of jihadist attackers, namely driving vehicles into crowds. British attacker Darren Osborne is an example of this. He drove into a crowd waiting by the Finsbury Park Mosque in London (19 June 2017), killing one person. Osborne had been radicalised within a short time, and his motive was revenge for various jihadist attacks in the UK. In Sweden, too, a right-wing extremist drove into a group of asylum seekers (without any resulting fatalities, however).[69]

One prominent aspect that is typical of many European right-wing extremists and right-wing terrorists is the fact that they often – unlike jihadists, for example – do not explicitly claim responsibility for their attacks. In Germany, for example, responsibility is claimed for only 24 per cent of right-wing extremist attacks.[70] This goes against the assumption that terrorists always claim responsibility for their violent acts in order to send a political and ideological message, and in doing so to explicitly spread fear among the population. The three members of the NSU, for example, did not claim responsibility for any of the attacks carried out on (mostly) Turkish citizens for an entire decade. This behaviour can be explained in several ways. Firstly, claiming responsibility increases the likelihood of detection by authorities. Under the concept of leaderless resistance, this can be a deliberate strategy. From a right-wing extremist perspective, a violent act committed against a mosque or synagogue can speak for itself, as the violent act is often enough to cause distress among the group in question. A notable exception is Anders Breivik, who, shortly

65   'Bundesanwaltschaft klagt Oberleutnant Franco A. an' [Federal Prosecutor's Office accuses lieutenant Franco A.'], *Zeit Online*, 12 December 2017.

66   *Namenslisten, Pistole und Granaten – und doch kein Terrorist?'* [Hit lists, guns and grenades – but not a terrorist?], *Welt*, https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article178893150/Der-Fall-Franco-A-Namenslisten-Pistole-und-Granaten-und-doch-kein-Terrorist.html, 9 July 2018.

67   'Twee gewonden na nieuwe avond vol onrust in Oost-Duitse stad Chemnitz' [Two wounded after another night of trouble in the east-German city of Chemnitz], NOS, 27 August 2018.

68   Ravndal, 'Perspectives on terrorism', p. 8.

69   The most well-known example of a vehicle attack by a right-wing extremist was the attack during an alt-right demonstration in Charlotteville, USA (17 August 2017), where an alt-right follower drove into a group of anti-racism counter-protesters. The copycat effect among terrorists of various ideological inclinations is part of a more detailed analysis, initiated by the NCTV (among others).

70   Ibid.

before committing his attacks, spread his 1,500-page manifest titled '2083 – A European declaration of independence' online.

Although most attacks are carried out conventionally and their execution is relatively simple, German right-wing extremist expert Daniel Koehler warns of the risk of right-wing extremists using chemical, bacteriological, radiological and nuclear means (CBRN).[71] His warning is based on previously-uncovered terrorist plots by right-wing terrorists, along with the idea that right-wing terrorists do not wish to be overshadowed by contemporary jihadist terrorists. In 2006, British neo-Nazi Ian Davidson was sentenced for being in possession of large volumes of ricin, which he himself had produced. He was convicted for intention to commit terrorist acts. Koehler also cites several examples from the United States, and sees these CBRN means principally as an opportunity for right-wing terrorists to spread major fear. He also believes the threat mainly affects the United States and the United Kingdom. He estimates the severity of the threat as very high, but the probability as quite low.

Lastly, it is important to consider the developments surrounding participation of right-wing extremist foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from Europe in Syria and Ukraine, a phenomenon that often receives less attention than jihadist foreign combatants. Right-wing extremist FTFs are no new phenomenon. During the Yugoslavian Civil War (1991-1999), for example, various European right-wing extremists joined up with units of the Croatian army. Since 2014, the armed conflict in Ukraine has also attracted a range of European right-wing extremists, many of whom in recent years have joined the ranks of the Ukrainian volunteer corps known as the Azov Battalion, which upholds a neo-Nazist ideology. Application and recruitment occurs mostly online.[72] Western-European right-wing extremists are also active on the pro-Russian separatist side,[73] as Russia is viewed by some right-wing extremists as the last country to uphold traditional values. This means that, on the battlefields of the eastern-Ukrainian combat zone, European right-wing extremists are fighting on both sides of the conflict.[74] The presence of many former soldiers from various European countries in these groups is striking. In Syria and Iraq, too, a range of westerners have been active in the military fight against ISIS. However, the exact motives of many participants in this region are less clear than those of the right-wing extremist fighters in eastern Ukraine. The full scope of the European right-wing extremist 'foreign combatant community' is difficult to estimate. The future return of these individuals to Europe nevertheless raises concerns regarding potential trauma and their willingness to commit violence.

A further source of concern is the violent training that some Western European right-wing extremists have had in Eastern Europe and Russia prior to committing violence. Two right-wing extremists from Sweden, who had been members of the neo-Nazist Nordic Resistance movement, but did not find the group to be radical enough, attacked an asylum seekers' centre in 2016, resulting in one injury. Prior to this attack, they had taken part in paramilitary training (including weapons training) with a private Russian ultranationalist organisation that prepares citizens for the 'imminent global chaos'.[75] According to the Swedish authorities, the training was a major contributor to the further radicalisation of the two actors. This type of training is also available in EU Member States, and right-wing extremists participate in these trainings. The trainings concentrate on the armed self-defence deemed necessary for a future battle.[76]

The Netherlands

Organisations are ambiguous regarding violence

As noted above in this report, the Dutch extreme right (whose activities are legal and pose no threat to democracy) and right-wing extremist groups (who do pose a threat to democracy) are not focused on violence. Nonetheless, active members of various extreme-right groups have certainly been convicted for right-wing extremist violence, as is the case with the NVU and Identitair Verzet (Identitarian Resistance, or IV). Other groups' attitude to violence is ambiguous. IV has spread photographs of destroyed property and blockades in Islamic schools, which could serve to spur others on. A certain fascination for weapons is also a traditional element of neo-Nazi groups that, in combination with the radical ideology, always presents a certain risk. In 2018, the number of active members in extreme-right and right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands was estimated at around 250 individuals.[77] This figure increased to around 420 during the refugee crisis, but declined again afterwards. The number of violent right-wing extremist individuals external to the organised frameworks responsible for the 48 instances of violence in 2016 is difficult to estimate, due to the group's limited visibility.

71   D. Koehler and P. Popella, 'Beware of CBRN Terrorism - From the Far-Right', in: *Small Wars Journal*, September 2017.

72   Europol, *TE-SAT 2015*, p. 35.

73   V. Likhachev, 'The Far Right in the Conflict between Russia and Ukraine', in: *Russie.Nei.Visions*, No. 95, Ifri, July 2016.

74   'Ukraine war pulls in foreign fighters', https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28951324, 1 September 2014.

75   'Russian Extremists Are Training Right-Wing Terrorists from Western Europe', https://www.thedailybeast.com/russian-extremists-are-training-right-wing-terrorists-from-western-europe, 8 February 2017.

76   'Generation Identity: Far right group sending UK recruits to military-style training camps in Europe', *Independent*, 9 November 2017

77   This estimate is based in part on the sixth Racism, Anti-Semitism and Right-wing Extremist Violence Report from 2016. Wagenaar based the calculations for this estimate on the numbers of members or adherents participating in public campaigns (demonstrations and protests) or other visible activities run by an organisation (indoor meetings or activities on social media). See *Zesde rapportage racisme, antisemitisme en extreemrechts geweld in Nederland* [Sixth report on Racism, Anti-Semitism and Right-wing Extremist Violence in the Netherlands] (2016), p. 42.

Modus operandi and selection of targets

In the Netherlands, the modus operandi and selection of targets in right-wing extremist violence corresponds in many respects to the situation in Europe in recent years, although there are (as yet) no indications of serious violence directed at people. Various editions of the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands have already stressed that, after a period of relative inactivity from 2010-2015, extreme-right and right-wing extremist groups gained momentum due to the social animosity towards the increased numbers of asylum seekers since 2015. Known extreme-right and right-wing extremist individuals, including members of the NVU, were sometimes present at disruptions to asylum-seeker information evenings, but did not act as initiating, coordinating or influencing parties.[78] These roles were fulfilled by local protest groups with no background in the extreme right or right-wing extremism. These groups did support such initiatives, however, and in some cases were present at information evenings where major disruptions took place. This period also saw the advent of extreme-right patrol groups in the Netherlands (Soldiers of Odin, Dutch Self Defence Army), but they proved barely active in practice.

Right-wing extremist violence is primarily directed at Islamic targets (mosques, Islamic centres and schools) and asylum seekers' centres, the latter of which were preferred targets during the high influx of refugees that took place mainly in late 2015 and 2016. In the Netherlands, the violent acts are very intimidating and intended to generate fear (as is the case with terrorism), though they are usually not aimed at taking lives. Partly because many such acts are carried out in secret and no responsibility is claimed (in accordance with international practice), the percentage of these cases that are detected is low. The international impression – of little to no collaboration among right-wing extremist organisations – also applies to the Netherlands. Member numbers of extreme-right and right-wing extremist groups such as Pegida Nederland, Identitair Verzet, the Dutch People's Union and Voorpost are limited, and personal rivalries generally prevent collaboration. No violence is propagated by these groups.

For some time now, the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands has reported that, while there are no indications of a right-wing terrorist attack by a lone actor or small group, such an attack would be conceivable. This threat materialised when, after a radicalisation process, a group originating from Demonstrators against Municipalities (Demonstranten tegen Gemeenten, DTG) in Enschede proved willing and able to launch an attack on a mosque. A strange fact about this attack was the justification offered by the perpetrators for their actions during their court case: their aim was to use violence to terrorise the municipality of Enschede and the Muslim community to prevent an asylum seekers' centre from being built in the city.[79] This demonstrated that, in their view, the

arrival of refugees was more or less tantamount to a suspected Islamic threat. The two main threats from the right-wing extremist perspective had been combined, as it were, in an attempt to legitimise the attack. Vincent T., who was arrested in May 2018 under suspicion of preparing a violent crime with terrorist intent against Muslims, is another example of a radical actor who may have been willing to commit violence. The Public Prosecution Service did note that he had not yet formed any concrete plans. In his court case, it is yet to be determined whether he genuinely had the potential to commit a violent attack.[80] T. was a part of the Anti-Terror Brigade (ATB), a small right-wing extremist group that formed late during the refugee crisis and is no longer active.

There was also one Dutch foreign combatant with a right-wing extremist background who first joined the ranks of the Ukrainian battalions, only to later choose the side of the Kurdish groups, with whom he fought against ISIS. He died in the spring of 2018 in Raqqa (Syria), and to date is the only known Dutch resident to have pursued such a course of action to its end. The phenomenon of right-wing extremist FTFs seems to be most common in Scandinavia. As it stands, the 26 most right-wing extremists in the Netherlands would not even seem prepared to commit serious violence, let alone start a race war. Although some right-wing extremists do philosophise about the inevitability of a race war, they harbour no belief that a substantial part of the Dutch population would support their efforts or participate in such a war.

The notion of committing violence against left-wing political opponents, which is gaining momentum internationally, has manifested even less in the Netherlands. There is an increasing willingness among right-wing extremists to seek confrontation with extreme-left activists, however. The campaigns surrounding Black Pete are an example of this. The traditional reticence of right-wing extremists to appear in 'left-wing' cities such as Nijmegen and Amsterdam has now disappeared, increasing the risk of confrontational violence in the Netherlands in recent times.

Reflection

Upon examination, the violence committed in Western Europe proves to be characterised by non-complex attacks carried out by smaller groups or cells. For now, the time when major attacks were carried out by large right-wing terrorist groups would seem to be over. Although these acts are usually not classified as 'terrorism', but are often regarded as 'hate crimes', they do occur regularly in Western Europe and have a considerable psychological impact on both the individuals who are directly affected and their broader communities. Internationally, Islamic targets (mosques, Islamic centres and schools), asylum seekers' centres and left-wing political opponents are the most common targets of right-wing extremist violence, although the latter target is less common. Due to the relatively disorganised and limited strategic nature of the

78   General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), *Jaarverslag* 2015 [2015 Annual Report], April 2016.

79   'District Court of Overijssel 08/952186-16', 27 October 2016, Rechtspraak.nl.

80   'Terreurverdachte Vincent T. blijft voorlopig vastzitten' [Terrorist suspect Vincent T. to remain in custody for now], *Omroep Gelderland*, 7 September 2018.

threat, it is sometimes underestimated and trivialised in assessments. The communications of various European security leaders indicate an increase in the right-wing extremist threat, as cells and groups are now working more professionally than before. Although terrorist attacks on the right-wing extremist spectrum are still the exception rather than the rule, the number of fatal attacks committed in Europe by lone actors or small groups is on the rise. Although this is also a conceivable risk in the Netherlands, it is more limited in scope than in the UK, Germany or France.

5. The role of the Internet and social media in right-wing extremist violence

Extensive Internet use by right-wing extremists

Various international studies have shown that right-wing extremist groups and individuals in Western Europe and the US have been taking maximum advantage of the opportunities offered to them by the Internet for over twenty years, such as specific websites with right-wing extremist content. Later, social media became widely used as well (social networks such as Facebook and Google+, microblogs such as Twitter and Tumblr, blogs, forums such as 'Stormfront' and video platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo).[81] In addition to a wide range of open and fairly accessible sources, right-wing extremists also established regular online contact via social media groups, apps, video-game chat functions and 'non-suspicious' forums without any direct link to right-wing extremist content. Some communications also run via pages on the dark web and the deep web, and via virtually unmoderated forums and discussion sites such as 4Chan, 8Chan and Reddit. Right-wing extremists also make use of online streaming services to spread propaganda, such as Spotify podcasts.

Right-wing extremists generally use the online world for gathering and exchanging ideological information (including ideological training), exchanging and sharing opinions, spreading news, fake news and propaganda, conspiracy theories, formation of groups, recruitment, mobilisation, publication and magnification of their own violent/other actions and the provocation and threatening of authorities and opponents (Muslims, left-wing extremists, Jews, the government, left-wing politicians and the media). The Internet is also a fundraising platform for activities through the sale of right-wing extremist merchandise via online outlets and the use of online crowdfunding or donations. The scope and frequency of use varies between individuals, activist groups and countries.

The online-offline context of right-wing extremist violence

Much right-wing extremist violence in Western Europe and the US can currently no longer be viewed separately from the online context in which it occurs. Discussions and opinions surrounding social developments and events online and in social media often act as a breeding ground for physical violence.[82] Some right-wing extremists use the Internet and social media for hatemongering, inciting violence, intimidation and threats, and to recruit and mobilise people to commit violence. They also use the Internet to glorify or trivialise right-wing extremist violence. At the same time, their online propaganda highlights the use of violence by their ideological and other opponents (such as left-wing extremists and Muslims). Some right-wing online communities also question the government's monopoly on power, and issue a call to take control themselves. It is thus that the right-wing extremist online scene is able to create and maintain persistent concepts of the enemy and an 'us-versus-them' mentality. Under some circumstances and with certain triggers, this can increase willingness to use violence against their opponents or against certain groups in the population. Several studies have shown that the Internet and social media have facilitated international communication and collaboration among some right-wing extremist groups and individuals in Western Europe and the US. Further research is needed to determine whether this has ultimately led to an actual increase in transnational collaboration in street acts of right-wing extremist violence. Various Dutch activist groups are known to be in communication across the border, sometimes with violent groups. Pegida Nederland, for

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81   Examples: M. Caiani and P. Kröll, 'The transnationalization of the extreme right and the use of the Internet', in: *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 7 November 2014. A. Klärner and M. Kohlstruck, *Moderner Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland* [Modern right-wing extremism in Germany], 2006; 'Die dunkle Seite des WWW. Rechtsextremismus und Internet' [The dark side of the web: Right-wing extremism and the Internet'], S. Salzborn and A. Maegerle, in: *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, 11 May 2016.

82   See also: AIVD, *Jaarverslag AIVD 2017* [AIVD 2017 Annual Report], 6 March 2018.

example, is in touch with the German group Hooligans gegen Salafisten (Hooligans against Salafists, HoGeSa).

Online calls to violence can be issued with the intent of taking genuine action, but they can also be intended 'merely' to intimidate or instil fear, in order to inhibit the threatened person, population group or organisation in their actions or to influence democratic decision-making. Whatever the case, these types of online calls to action must always be deemed to have the potential to result in real action by a group, several individuals or a lone actor. Online intimidation can also have an enormous impact on the lives of the relevant population groups, organisations and persons (including their loved ones). A particular form of intimidation is online hyperbole surrounding a protest act (at a mosque, for example), possibly accompanied by symbolism such as wooden crosses and pig's blood (Pegida) or a decapitated doll with a threatening letter (an act by Rechts in Verzet). The intended targets find such campaigns extremely threatening and insulting.

Online right-wing extremism and violence in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, there are publicly accessible right-wing extremist and sympathiser pages on the Internet that present limited but explicit support for physical acts of violence. Following the right-wing terrorist attack on the mosque in Enschede, online declarations of support for the perpetrators were virtually non-existent. This is strange, when compared to the solidarity shown online for perpetrators among jihadists and left-wing extremists. Among the Dutch population in general, there is relatively little online attention and no support anywhere for right-wing extremist violence. Extreme-right and right-wing extremist groups such as Pegida, Voorpost, Identitair Verzet, the NVU and Erkenbrand hence constantly stress the non-violent nature of their campaigns and meetings, partly in an effort to avoid scaring off interested parties. It should be noted that the online following of these activist groups is significantly larger (many thousands of followers and likes) than the active physical following; activities and events often only count several dozen to, at most, several hundred attendees. However, implicit support can be found online among these activist groups and their followers for right-wing extremist violence aimed at Muslims, asylum seekers or left-wing activists. This support is expressed by means such as adding a comment to a news report on a relevant event on Facebook, in which the poster expresses some level of understanding for the act, trivialises the violence or does not explicitly condemn the act. Occasionally, the moderator of a Facebook page will not remove any responses to the post that explicitly approve of the violent act or call others to similar action.

Facebook pages or Twitter accounts of right-wing extremist activist groups also commonly serve as a place to publicise events such as the occupation of a mosque (or nearby premises) by the page's followers or sympathisers. These accounts also serve as a conduit for messages about intimidating illicit actions by individuals aimed at targets such as a mosque, Islamic school or asylum seekers' centre. Some groups do not claim responsibility for the act themselves (such as destruction of property, locks on school doors, threatening letters to mosques), but publicise it nonetheless, often accompanied by photographs or video footage. Incidentally, the longer-lived Dutch branches of international neo-Nazi activist groups who are known for their violent image (such as Blood & Honour and Combat 18) are barely publicly active on the Internet any longer. It is likely that they have completely ceased ideological communications on social media, but communicate personally via telephone, Facebook or messaging apps.

Aside from the activist groups, recent years have seen multiple instances of Dutch right-wing extremists or sympathisers who have (either openly or in veiled terms), individually on Twitter or via online comments, called out to set fire to asylum seekers' centres, threatened Muslims with violence or challenged left-wing extremists to physical combat. Politicians, public administrators and 'left-wing' media are also regular targets of intimidation or threats. Only a few such perpetrators have ever been arrested or punished.

Both right and left-wing extremists regularly seek each other out for violent confrontation, challenging their opponents online first and mobilising supporters on the Internet or via WhatsApp groups. Heated social-media discussions between both sides have also raged on issues such as Black Pete and occupation actions by left-wing extremists in support of failed asylum seekers in Amsterdam. Online threats have been issued, and right and left-wing extremists have taken steps towards violent confrontation on several occasions, leading to rare, brief physical altercations (such as during the anti-Black-Pete rally in Nijmegen). There is evidence of an increase in self-assurance and willingness to enter into confrontation among right-wing extremists, in forms such as the Stop Antifa Terror and Young Activist Together initiatives, which aim to track down left-wing extremists and threaten them with violence. When seeking out their opponents and in other campaigns, outside the customary activist groups, individual right-wing extremists are making increasingly greater use of Project-X-type calls to action on Facebook.

Lastly, the traditional fascination with weapons among some right-wing extremists is evinced by photographs placed online in which they pose while holding fake weapons.

Right-wing populist websites as incitement

In recent years, anti-migrant and xenophobic sentiments on social media in the Netherlands have increased in number and become more vicious in tone. Many 'angry citizens' and right-wing populist politicians and opinion makers can identify with the anti-Islam and anti-refugee discourse, and express their views *en masse* on Twitter and Facebook. What is more, their rage is also directed at left-wing activists, politicians and media, whom they believe are more concerned with Muslims and refugees than with the fate of

'real' Dutch citizens. Many within the population are also discontented with the work of the government and the EU. In recent years, various nationalistic, right-wing populist Facebook pages have appeared and increased in scope, such as Liefde voor Holland (Love for Holland), Nederland mijn vaderland (The Netherlands, my Fatherland) and various pages that sympathise with the Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV). They provide a platform for these feelings of dissatisfaction, concern, lack of safety and rage that are felt strongly among sections of the population. Although these pages do not encourage physical violence, they do sometimes call for 'resistance' without any further specification.

During the protests against asylum-seeker locations and Islam in late 2015 and early 2016, the well-known Twitter hashtag *#kominverzet* ('rise in resistance') that had frequently been used by politician Geert Wilders became a prominent battle cry for what was, in principle, non-violent protest. The hashtag was used tens of thousands of times in social-media outcries by local angry citizens and the right-wing populist community, and later also by right-wing extremists.[83] The wholesale use of *#kominverzet* served to consolidate and unite all opinions of the opposition, strengthening the cause and giving participants the feeling that they were not alone in their protest. Once right-wing extremists increasingly expressed their public support and their willingness to move beyond non-violent protest, the hashtag effectively became tainted, as many citizens and populists did not wish to be 'tarred with the same brush' as right-wing extremists. The Identitair Verzet activist group still prominently uses *#kominverzet* today in its online propaganda and calls to action. News reports and responses to right-wing news sites and blogs such as E.J. Bron, De Nieuwe Realist, Geenstijl, PowNed, The Post Online and De Dagelijkse Standaard still regularly use xenophobic rhetoric. In recent years, these and other social media pages have also started to express greater sympathy for certain ideas and standpoints by the alt-right and Erkenbrand. Many of these pages contain space for conspiracy theorists, who often question the government's authority.

Alt-right and the use of memes
More and more discussions in the US (and, more recently, in Western Europe) on social media and 4Chan concern what is known as the 'alt-right movement' (see also Section 3). In the Netherlands, the Erkenbrand study association is an exponent of the alt-right movement that is extremely active online. Its international perspective is evident in the contributions to the group's podcasts and conferences by various seminal Anglo-Saxon opinion makers and speakers in the alt-right movement. In addition to spreading ideological ideas online, Erkenbrand also engages in combat training and training of the male body. Online discussion topics include anti-Semitism, white supremacy, racial

doctrine and genetics. A noteworthy feature of these online discussions is misogyny, resistance to feminism and support for the rights of (particularly white) men. Various obscure online initiatives exist in the US, which also have an on-street presence, to fight as necessary for the rights of white men, whom they believe to be the victims of feminism.[84] Violent initiatives such as these have not yet reached the streets of the Netherlands.

Behaviours that are often associated with alt-right Internet culture primarily include the – often anonymous – spreading of racist memes (image-based online messages intended as humour) on websites such as 4Chan and Hiddenlol, bullying behaviour on discussion forums and insults and threats directed at politics and the cultural left. The tone of these types of messages is often ironic and provocative, however, and they are thus often referred to as 'alt-lite'. They serve to package racist or violent communications in a light-hearted way, which a) generates less disgust and opposition and b) interests a broader public in their message, who internalise it unnoticed. The identifying mark of alt-right and alt-lite, and also the basis for most memes, is a cartoon figure named Pepe the Frog. Pepe began his online life in an apolitical online comic strip, but was appropriated by the extreme-right subculture and embraced as their own symbol around 2014. In the Netherlands, Pepe memes are often shared by followers of Erkenbrand and the Forum for Democracy. Pepe has since been declared defunct by his creator, and classified as a hate symbol by the Jewish Anti-Defamation League for civil rights.[85]

Security awareness is a prominent feature
The online activities of most right-wing extremists and right-wing activist groups in the Netherlands revolve around security awareness. What stands out is that the Dutch right-wing extremist groups themselves consistently highlight the non-violent nature of their activities, and will never send threats themselves or issue direct calls to violent action. Publicly (i.e. including online), these activist groups will at least maintain a facade of lawfulness. They are aware of the 'watchful eye' of the police, security services and the moderators of the various social media platforms. For several years, large platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Google (YouTube) have claimed to be more vigilant against right-wing extremist content. Prior to this, little action was taken against right-wing extremist hatemongering, even by the police or the Public Prosecution Service. As a result, some individuals felt that they could simply say and write whatever they wished, without any practical or legal consequences. Nowadays, however, the social media accounts of notorious offenders are regularly blocked or deleted due to their right-wing extremist or violent content. Still,

83   NCTV, *Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 41* [Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands 41], March 2016.

84   'Misogyny is a key element of white supremacy', *The Independent,* 25 July 2018. Anti-Defamation League report finds Anti-Defamation League (ADL), 'When Women are the Enemy: The Intersection of Misogyny and White Supremacy', 24 July 2018.

85   Volkskrant.nl, 'Hoe internet van Pepe the Frog een haatsymbool maakte' [How the Internet turned Pepe the Frog into a hate symbol], 28 September 2016.

there are doubts regarding the effectiveness of this approach. Blocked people or accounts often return without a problem,[86] and there are reports that Facebook (and other platforms) have left various holocaust denials, anti-Semitic cartoons and photographic messages untouched, despite them having been reported.[87] Freedom of speech is often cited as an argument for inaction.

There has also been a recent shift in right-wing extremist accounts since 2016, from large platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (which are deemed troublesome) towards more obscure and less strict social media platforms such as VKontakte (VK) and Gab.ai. These platforms defend their policy regarding (sometimes punishable) right-wing extremist content by claiming to respect the universal right to freedom of speech. Although some Dutch right-wing extremists have also become active on these alternative platforms, most still frequent the better-known larger platforms as well. This is certainly also the case with the more high-profile activist groups, as they can achieve a greater reach and influence there, and not all followers will make the move to the new platforms.

It is also a known fact that several activist groups (such as Erkenbrand and IV) have recruited potential members or activists based on their profile and responses on social media. According to various experts, however, the online recruitment of right-wing extremist activists by Dutch activist groups is still extremely limited due to security concerns – the group must not fall into discredit, after all, and working in small groups where the members all know and trust each other is preferred. Newcomers are welcome to donate funds or provide general assistance, however. Right-wing extremists prefer not to use public social media channels to communicate during campaigns or organise secret meetings. They often make single use of prepaid telephones, which are subsequently destroyed and disposed of to avoid detection by security services. They are also frequent users of secure email services, such as ProtonMail.

Reflection
Just like other radical groups, right-wing extremists take advantage of all the functionalities the Internet has to offer. The Internet and social media are what allow right-wing extremists to quickly keep up with international developments and issues. Moreover, the rise of the alt-right movement and its ideas within right-wing extremist online environments in recent years are evidence of how quickly right-wing ideological shifts can take place via the Internet and social media.

On Dutch open online sources, there are signs of ambivalence among right-wing extremists regarding the use of violence. Right-wing extremist activist groups stress the non-violent nature of their activities, and individuals rarely issue direct calls to violence (unlike some jihadists, for example). However, indirect sympathy can regularly be seen online among right-wing extremists for violent acts committed against Muslims, migrants or left-wing extremists. This is expressed by either not rejecting or articulating some understanding for right-wing extremist or xenophobic behaviour, trivialising the behaviour or sharing news reports of such behaviour. International studies have shown that right-wing extremists do use closed social-media groups and less-accessible websites to communicate about the use of violence.

Security awareness among Dutch right-wing extremists online has increased in recent years. Partly due to the threat of xenophobic accounts being blocked or deleted by major social media platforms and potential legal prosecution, they are fearful of expressing excessively extremist sentiments. The well-known activist groups do need the major public social media platforms, however, since these platforms provide a larger reach than the alternative, less-frequented platforms.

Through its accessibility and facilitating role, the Internet (and social media in particular) has succeeded in creating a hostile anti-Islam and anti-immigrant climate among a large portion of the population in Western Europe in recent years, including in the Netherlands. In these spaces, political correctness has been eschewed, the ambience has become more sinister and, ultimately, multiple calls to violent action have been issued. In some cases, right-wing populist websites in the Netherlands have attempted to incite and promote xenophobia. Many use these pages as an outlet to express fear and rage. Despite the almost complete lack of public sympathy for right-wing extremists or any calls to commit physical violence, the messages and the climate being fostered have in some cases had an encouraging effect nonetheless. On the other hand, these populist sites might also serve as a 'vent', where the ability to blow off steam online ultimately results in less physical violence (or violent tendencies). Further research is necessary before any conclusions are drawn in this regard.

86   'A year after Charlottesville, why can't big tech delete white supremacists?', *The Guardian*, 25 July 2018.

87   'Holocaust denial not classed as hate speech by Facebook', *The Times*, 27 July 2018.

6. Some explanations for right-wing extremist and terrorist violence

The phenomenon of violent radicalisation

In the study of terrorism (both jihadism and right-wing terrorism), attempting to explain the violent phenomenon is an important but complicated matter. Although the media sometimes still proposes monocausal explanations for terrorism, most experts have now reached the conclusion that violent radicalisation of an individual or group is an emergent property of a complex and dynamic process involving a rich interplay of social (macro), group (meso) and personal (micro) elements.[88] The relevant factors at macro level include social phenomena and developments, such as the presence of a radical ideology, social polarisation or national/international political events that can serve as a trigger or fertile ground for radicalisation. The meso level concerns social environments in which radical ideologies or violence are tolerated and/or encouraged – to use a German term, an *Umfeld* or 'environment' that can exert a certain influence on violent/other paths to radicalisation. Lastly, at micro level, there are factors that affect characteristics and personality traits that can render people open to radicalisation. For example, a traumatic event in the personal life of a later terrorist has often proved instrumental in their radicalisation. Of note is the observation that most persons who undergo radicalisation often remain at the bottom of the radicalism 'pyramid'; very few continue on the journey towards violent extremism, and fewer still ultimately take the step towards joining a terrorist group or committing terrorist violence.

Explanations for right-wing extremist violence in the literature

Research has been seeking to identify causes of right-wing extremist and right-wing terrorist violence since the nineties, when extremist violence began to increase in various Western-European countries. One of the questions asked was why some European countries had higher levels of right-wing extremism than others. Although theories from social-movement studies[89] were applied in several comparative analyses, there was ultimately but limited empirical proof for these theories, partly due to the limited availability and comparability of data. After right-wing extremist violence began to decline once more in the early 2000s, so too did scholarly interest. Current young researchers (such as Ravndal and others[90]) have therefore reached the conclusion that we actually have little scientific understanding of the underlying causes of right-wing extremist and right-wing terrorist violence.[91] Researchers have put forward a range of theories that pose (potential) links between the above-mentioned macro level factors and right-wing extremist violence. These include:

1. Links to increasing migrant numbers

This is a classic problem that extreme-right and right-wing extremist groups can take advantage of to achieve mobilisation. Common themes include the emphasis placed on the threat that migrants present to society and the powerlessness of the government to properly manage the process or arrive at political solutions.

2. Links to extreme right and right-wing populist parties

There is little to no academic consensus on this connection, and the picture presented by the literature is vague. There are various

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88　See (among others): Feddes, Doosje and Nickelson, 'Triggerfactoren in het radicaliseringsproces' [Trigger factors in the radicalisation process], in: *Justitiële Verkenningen*, Issue 42, May 2016.

89　This concerns research in the social sciences, looking at the factors that lead to social mobilisation, the conditions under which it occurs and what the consequences are.

90　R. Briggs and M. Goodwin, 'We need a better understanding of what drives right-wing extremist violence', http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48364/1/ blogs.lse.ac.uk-We_need_a_better_understanding_of_what_drives_ rightwing_extremist_violence.pdf.

91　Ravndal, 'Explaining right-wing terrorism and violence in Western Europe: Grievances, opportunities and polarization', Unpublished manuscript, 2017.

scholars[92] who, based in part on the scientific 'opportunity model', point out that the presence of right-wing populist parties means that more widespread grievances (such as the influx of migrants or Islam) are placed on the political agenda, thus paving the way for a political solution to the perceived problem. According to the theory, aggrieved citizens in this situation should feel less motivated to use right-wing extremist violence. Evidence for this theory can be derived from the fact that countries where right-wing populist parties of reasonable size have been in parliament for some time, such as France (Front National), the Netherlands (LPF, PVV, FvD), Belgium (Vlaams Blok/Vlaams Belang) and Denmark (Danish People's Party) have experienced less right-wing extremist violence than countries such as Germany, the UK and Sweden, where right-wing populist parties only recently joined parliament. Other scholars argue that the ambivalence expressed regarding violence by some extreme right and right-wing populist parties, along with their repeatedly xenophobic propaganda, can constitute fertile ground for the use of violence.[93] A correlation has also been proposed in Germany between increased xenophobic political rhetoric and the rise in the number of right-wing extremist incendiary bomb attacks.[94]

3. Links to clashes between ideological opponents (extreme left and left-wing)

A further aspect that may promote right-wing extremist violence is the existence of radical, extreme-left activist groups who take action in radical or other ways against their extreme-right counterparts. This can result in a process of cumulative extremism in which groups use violence alternately against one another, escalating in a spiral of violence.

4. Links to jihadist attacks

The ongoing threat of terrorist attacks justified by jihadist perpetrators based on Islam can cause national tensions to rise. Right-wing extremists view the government as powerless to confront this threat or guarantee safety, and can see themselves as the heroes against this threat.

5. Links to (relative) socio-economic deprivation and the economic crisis

In some countries, persistent unemployment and a lack of opportunity, or the notion that jobs or houses are being taken by foreigners, could fuel right-wing extremism. Due to the financial crisis, this deprivation is thought to have increased from 2008 until around 2012. This correlation is also cited with reference to other forms of terrorism, such as jihadism. There are those who object to

this theory, however, and who point out that most terrorists come from the economic middle class. There are also studies showing that economic improvements have not reduced terrorism. Relative deprivation – subjective dissatisfaction based on one's position relative to another – can also feed into right-wing extremism.

6. Links to former authoritarian regimes

Even long after their disappearance, former extreme-right or extreme-left regimes can still influence a country's society (tensions between the former opposing sides) and political culture (repression of radical groups). Some activists may also long for the return, or take action on behalf of, the former regime.

7. Links to the repression of extreme-right and right-wing extremist groups

This is the idea that the repression or prohibition of extreme-right groups simply drives them underground, where they can continue the radicalisation process, possibly in the direction of violence.

Although these seven hypotheses all offer plausible explanations for right-wing extremist violence, the correlations between these variables have rarely been the subject of study, according to Ravndal. It could also be argued that specific factors might have a certain effect in a particular country, but not in another: France and Switzerland, for example, saw hardly any right-wing extremist violence for a long period despite considerable migration, while Italy and Spain (until the recent migration crisis) experienced plenty of violence despite minimal migration patterns.

The Netherlands

Macro factors

When applying the above macro factors to the Netherlands (leaving aside scholarly disagreement), factors 1 (increasing migrant numbers), 2 (links to extreme right and right-wing populist parties) and 4 (links to jihadist attacks) are of the greatest relevance.

As we know, the increased migration figures since 2015 are an aspect that right-wing extremist groups have latched onto, and to which activists (including those outside right-wing extremism) have responded violently in some cases. The number of right-wing extremist acts also declined along with migration figures (see Section 2).

Dutch right-wing populist parties have had representation in the Dutch parliament since 2002. Widespread grievances in society regarding migrants, Islam and radical Muslims thus obtained a parliamentary representation and a high position on the political agenda. This might have served to take the wind out of the sails of more radical, extra-parliamentary groups, while those in Germany (where the AfD only recently became prominently active) and the United Kingdom became larger in scope and violent. If a right-wing populist party has held seats in parliament for a long time, however, and has remained unable to implement the desired

92 See (among others): W. Heitmeyer, 'Right-wing terrorism', in: Bjørgo, *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, 2004. R. Koopmans, 'A burning question: explaining the rise of racist and extreme right violence in Western Europe' (1995), p.146.

93 P. Wilkinson, 'Violence and terror and the extreme right', in: *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7, no. 4, 1995.

94 F. Neubacher, *Fremdenfeindliche Brandanschläge* [Anti-migrant incendiary attacks], 1998.

policy, the question remains as to whether this will be enough to satisfy existing and potential extreme-right citizens in the long term. A tendency has also been observed among radical and sometimes violent activists to use the comments of politicians to justify their own actions. Activists thus justified violent acts during the migration crisis by citing Freedom Party leader Wilders' slogan 'Rise in Resistance' (*Kom in Verzet*), despite his call for non-violent protest (see Section 5).[95]

Jihadist attacks also constitute a threat in the Netherlands. Although the Netherlands has not suffered any major jihadist attacks (unlike its neighbouring countries), there have been many jihadist developments (Dutch citizens leaving the Netherlands to join ISIS, returning jihadists, arrests), serving to increase polarisation in the Netherlands. Extreme-right groups have made use of this fact in their propaganda, often accompanied by an emphasis on the purported Islamification of the Netherlands. To date, this has not led to any extensive, radical extra-parliamentary movements. Still, the Netherlands should be prepared for a violent response by right-wing extremists in the event of a large-scale jihadist attack.

Other factors that could affect right-wing extremist violence have been less relevant to the Netherlands until now, and can be regarded as tempering factors. Although some extreme-left activist groups (such as Anti-Fascist Action, AFA) demonstrate and respond actively to extreme-right demonstrations, occasionally using violence to do so, these acts have not yet reached the intensity and scope of those in Germany or Southern European countries. Although various activists have responded to the arrival of asylum seekers with the claim that they are stealing homes and benefits from Dutch citizens, the Dutch standard of living is considerably higher and national socio-economic differences far smaller than in Southern European countries, which were hit harder by the economic crisis. At individual level, this factor may genuinely contribute to radicalisation due to feelings of powerlessness against 'the elite'. There has historically been little outright oppression of right-wing extremist parties and groups in the Netherlands, partly because their size has always been limited. The prohibition of a right-wing extremist party (such as CP'86) did not lead to any major protests (see Section 2), nor has the Netherlands ever had a former authoritarian regime that could still exert a pull on citizens.

There are also factors at meso level that could be used to explain why right-wing extremism in the Netherlands has remained relatively limited until now. Although some groups do philosophise about the use of serious violence, many have the feeling that there is too little social support for any potential

violent acts. Many also view the likelihood of detection as too great. Only a few therefore consider it a serious option right now.

Reflection

Explaining the differences in proliferation of extremist and terrorist violence between countries is no simple matter, and right-wing extremism is no exception. Identifying direct causal links is impossible; the violent radicalisation of individuals will generally depend on various macro, meso and micro-factors, as well as their interaction. Right-wing extremism has often been shown to correlate with socially-polarising issues involving the extreme right. These primarily include the influx of migrants, the threat of jihadist attacks and the purported Islamification of Western Europe and the Netherlands, along with questions of identity such as Black Pete and the Netherlands' history of slavery. Violent actors can interpret this polarisation as a prompt to action, or as a source of 'implicit' support for their behaviour. In various countries, a range of contextual factors can contribute to the rise of right-wing extremist violence, but without any clear pattern of relationships. Exactly how factors interact in this way will likely remain a topic of research over the next few decades. In principle, other issues may also become relevant in the future and constitute a trigger for new right-wing extremist violence.

95   NCTV, *Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 41* [Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands 41], March 2016. NCTV.nl/binaries/samenvatting-dtn-41_tcm31-32602.pdf.

Conclusion:
The implications of threats to national security

The outline given above of the developments in right-wing extremist violence in Western Europe shows that the phenomenon has been in flux over the previous decade. Ideological renewal, the use of new online functionalities and growing polarisation in Western Europe have all served to boost the right-wing extremist movement. The fluidity of right-wing extremism and its ability to adapt to the modern age come as no surprise, as this has always been characteristic of right-wing extremist groups. Old objectives, such as the reinstatement of authoritarian regimes following the Second World War (in the fifties and sixties) have metamorphosed into anti-refugee (from the seventies onwards) and anti-Islam/ Muslim sentiments (from 2001 onwards). New causes are certainly conceivable for the future.

Although right-wing extremist violence in Europe occurred in waves following the Second World War, gaining a comprehensive overview and understanding of the current scope of right-wing extremist violence remains difficult. An unambiguous quantitative overview of Europe is still lacking, partly due to persistent problems of definition and data collection. However, it can still be concluded that, although right-wing extremist/terrorist violence in Western Europe has increased over the past five years, it has still not reached the levels from the early nineties, a previous wave of right-wing extremist violence. Large right-wing terrorist organisations (such as those from the 1960s to the 1980s) no longer exist in Western Europe. Although most violent acts have been, still are and will most likely continue to be carried out by poorly-organised groups and individuals who commit extremist violence that is not aimed at taking human life, recent years have seen various instances of right-wing terrorist violence (principally by lone actors and small units) that did involve professional operations. The most deadly of these were the Breivik attacks, which remain unique in terms of their preparation (professional) and execution (complex attacks). For a long time, smaller groups (such as the NSU) were likewise able to operate without detection by the German authorities and still achieve serious violence. In

some countries (such as England and France), these smaller units are also more professional. Various right-wing extremist groups and individuals in Western Europe are striving to instigate a civil war in response to jihadist intentions. The narratives of these two extremist ideologies can serve to enhance one another.

The refugee crisis, alongside the long-simmering grievances regarding Islam and jihadism, would seem to have been an important macro-factor and catalyst for right-wing extremist violence. In many Western-European countries, violent responses from the extreme right have come on the heels of jihadist attacks. Right-wing extremism has often been shown to correlate with socially-polarising issues involving the extreme right. A striking fact is that such violence need not originate from right-wing extremist groups – citizens from outside organised right-wing extremist frameworks are also capable of committing violence motivated by right-wing extremism. Although the flow of refugees entering Western Europe receded in 2018, the question remains as to whether the wave of right-wing extremist violence will do the same. As things stand, the refugee crisis would seem to be more of an initial trigger for boosting the formation of right-wing extremist groups than an incidental surge. However, there are currently no indications of a fifth wave of right-wing terrorist violence, in the tradition of the historic terrorist waves of Rapoport.

The Netherlands has historically seen less right-wing extremist violence than countries such as Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, and has never been home to any large-scale right-wing terrorist violence. There have been occurrences of right-wing extremist violence since the 1970s, however, as well as occasional surges (in the nineties especially). In recent years, the violence has concentrated primarily on Islamic targets (such as mosques and Muslim schools), in parallel with the polarised debate on Islam in the Netherlands. Right-wing extremism has also proven to be flexible in the Netherlands as well, responding to

current affairs and making use of contemporary social media. Extreme-right and right-wing extremist groups have actively responded to new grievances and discontent regarding the 2015-2016 refugee crisis and the position of Black Pete – but without increasing in size, it should be noted. In the Netherlands, right-wing extremist violence is generally not formally organised, and is committed by small groups or individuals who do not necessarily belong to well-known right-wing extremist organisations. This corresponds to the situation and threat assessment of right-wing extremism in most European countries. The (failed) attack on a mosque in Enschede fit the European template precisely in terms of both the target and the criminal profile (a small group that had undergone rapid radicalisation). Attacks of this type are still conceivable within the present Dutch context.

Significance for national Dutch security

The right-wing extremist and right-wing terrorist threat is of relevance to national security, as it potentially threatens social and political stability and can endanger the physical security of Dutch citizens. Here, 'social and political stability' refers to the continued, undisturbed existence of a social climate in which individuals can function unimpeded and cohabit effectively within the achievements of the Dutch democratic rule of law and its shared values.[96] Physical security refers to the risk of large numbers of potential victims. This latter aspect is currently not an issue in the Netherlands, as there are no concrete indications of any groups or individuals with the intention or potential to commit large-scale terrorist violence.

The cumulative effect of years of violent extremist incidents that, like terrorism, are also intended to create fear is a point of concern, however. Social and political stability can be undermined by the various violent incidents surrounding Islamic objects, asylum seekers' centres or asylum permit holders, instilling fear into both those directly involved and their surrounding communities. This puts pressure on Dutch society, especially following the Enschede mosque attack or resulting from the various violent acts committed during the refugee crisis. The pressure on the safety of these right-wing extremist targets was (and is) not so great that they could not continue to function in society, however. There are therefore no signs of destabilisation. Given the potential destruction from right-wing extremists and terrorists, the top priority is now to continue to monitor the threat as closely as possible, and reduce it wherever there is an opportunity.

96   National Network of Safety and Security Analysts (ANV), *Nationaal Veiligheidsprofiel 2016* [National Security Profile 2016], https://www.nctv. nl/binaries/Nationaal%20Veiligheidsprofiel%20 2016_tcm31-232083.pdf

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