



National Coordinator for
Counterterrorism and Security
Ministry of Justice and Security

Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands

June 2025



Photo caption cover:

The Special Intervention Service and the Royal Netherlands Navy conduct a large-scale counterterrorism exercise in and around the port of Rotterdam. The port is an essential hub for Western Europe.

Terrorist threat level for the Netherlands remains at level 4: ‘substantial’

There is a real chance that an attack will take place in the Netherlands.

In light of this substantial terrorist threat, the threat level remains at 4 on a scale from 1 to 5. The main factors on which the threat level is based are described below.

Ongoing jihadist threat

Jihadism continues to pose a significant and persistent threat. In Europe, during the past few months, there were as many jihadist attacks and thwarted attack plans as in the entire second half of 2024.¹ It is possible that perpetrators of other attacks were also motivated by radical Islamist beliefs.²

Many of the perpetrators behind these attacks acted alone: they were mostly inspired by Islamic State (ISIS), but were not directed by them. Although they did not have a marked preference for a target, it does seem that – given the symbolic value and the prospect of media attention – they tended to gravitate towards Jewish or Israeli targets, individuals accused of acts of anti-Islamic desecration, or events involving large crowds.

These kinds of individual attacks, such as knife attacks, are straightforward to carry out, but they can nonetheless claim many victims. This is certainly the case if a vehicle is driven into a crowd of people. These types of attacks can inspire copycat violence, even among people from a different ideological background.

A considerable proportion of the jihadists known to the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) and other Western agencies are also active in the online jihadist community, where their activities include consuming, making, editing and disseminating jihadist content. Many of them are members of online groups, networks and/or channels where they come into contact with other jihadists. These networks, which transcend national borders, consist largely of teenagers and young adults. They also include Dutch nationals who are involved in such activities. There is a risk

¹ See annexe 1: Overview of terrorist attacks and arrests for planning attacks.

² Ibid.

that a lone individual, a few people or a larger group could commit an act of violence in the Netherlands, possibly inspired by propaganda. However, estimating the true scope of this violent threat remains a challenge. By contrast, the threat posed by known, older real-world networks is on the decline.

In addition to the threat posed by radicalised individuals, the Netherlands is also confronted with the threat associated with jihadist groups from the 'ISIS provinces'. The threat to the West presented by Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) has proven particularly durable. ISKP has an international agenda which includes striking at the West. ISKP seeks to radicalise people through the internet. In addition, it makes use of networks from Central Asia or the Caucasus which have often had a presence in Europe for some time. It is relatively easy for jihadists in Western countries to come into contact with media organisations associated with ISIS provinces. Members of those provinces then encourage jihadists in Western countries to carry out attacks. The threat posed by ISIS Syria and ISIS Somalia seems to have temporarily decreased. In recent months they have been subjected to heavy military assaults, which appear to have disrupted their ability to mount external attacks.



Threat level remains at 4.

This means that there is a realistic possibility that an attack will take place in the Netherlands.

Threat level

4

Concerns about right-wing terrorist threat

Dutch government organisations remain deeply concerned about rapid online radicalisation in right-wing online terrorist networks, especially in the youth demographic. There is a real chance that individuals or small groups that are active in those circles could commit terrorist violence. As with young jihadists, they come in contact with violent and terrorist content through social media. And because such individuals can be difficult to detect, they can become further radicalised without attracting the attention of the authorities, under the influence of an ideologically fragmented, violent ideology, in combination with psychosocial and psychiatric problems. As with jihadists, these are often minors whose identities are still being formed and who are therefore especially vulnerable to external influences.

Anti-institutional movement poses violent threat

A small segment of the anti-institutional extremist movement poses a violent threat, which may include acts of terrorism. Self-styled ‘sovereign citizens’ are a key subgroup. Both last year and shortly before publication of this Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, a number of sovereign citizens were arrested on suspicion of, among other things, inciting the preparation of a terrorist offence and participating in a terrorist organisation. However, these arrests have not entirely eliminated the potential threat posed by the small group of anti-institutional extremists who are prepared to use violence.

Influence of Russian state threat on extremism and terrorism

The state threat posed by Russia has increased. This threat takes a variety of forms: a military threat, espionage (both physical and digital), sabotage and subversive influencing. Interactions between Russian actors and Western anti-institutional and right-wing extremists are an element of that threat, but are less common in the Netherlands than in a number of other Western countries. For now, the impact of those interactions on the extremist and terrorist threat in the Netherlands is therefore limited.



Threat level remains at 4.
Chance of an attack is real

4

There is still a substantial terrorist threat in the Netherlands. The jihadist threat has not diminished. There is also a real chance that individuals from right-wing terrorist circles will resort to violence.

Jihadist threat.

Threat posed by ISKP persists, but threat from ISIS in Syria and Somalia currently lower



ISKP is still trying to carry out attacks in Europe via existing networks from Central Asia and the Caucasus. The physical threat to Europe posed by ISIS Syria and ISIS Somalia seems to have decreased at present, but has not disappeared. ISIS is also inspiring lone actors to commit attacks. Such attacks are often straightforward to carry out but can nonetheless claim many victims, such as when a vehicle is driven into a crowd of people.

The Dutch jihadist movement.

The threat persists and is posed mainly by young people who are active online



In the Netherlands, as elsewhere in the world, jihadists are active online. Some are part of online jihadist networks with members from various countries. These networks largely consist of teenage boys or young men. There is a risk that an individual or small group may resort to the use of terrorist violence. By contrast, the threat posed by older physical networks has declined.

**Terrorist Threat
Assessment for the
Netherlands**
June 2025

Anti-institutional terrorism and extremism.

Anti-institutional extremism still poses terrorist threat



Despite several arrests, a small number of anti-institutional extremists who are prepared to use violence continue to pose a violent threat. 'Sovereign citizens' are a key subgroup of the extremist part of the anti-institutional movement.

Interaction between Russia and anti-institutional and right-wing extremists.

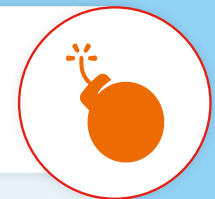
Limited impact on extremist and terrorist threat in the Netherlands at present



The state threat posed by Russia has increased. This threat takes a variety of forms: a military threat, espionage, sabotage (physical and digital) and subversive influencing. Interactions between Russia and Western anti-institutional and right-wing extremists are an element of the threat. The impact of such interaction in the Netherlands is currently limited.

Right-wing terrorism.

Right-wing terrorist threat undiminished



Government organisations remain deeply concerned about rapid online radicalisation in right-wing terrorist online networks, especially among teenage boys and young men. It is possible that individuals or small groups may commit terrorist violence.

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Introduction

Goal and structure

The Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN) provides insight into the threat to the Netherlands posed by terrorism and violent extremism, the interests that could be affected by this, and our degree of resilience. It also examines typically non-violent extremist movements if there are indications that they could potentially commit terrorist acts or other forms of serious violence. International developments are also taken into account if they affect the threat to the Netherlands or Dutch interests abroad. The DTN is used by the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) to set the threat level, which is an assessment of the general terrorist threat over a longer period of time.

The DTN is based on research into all forms of terrorism and violent extremism, regardless of their ideological origins. If certain subjects are not mentioned in the DTN, such as Salafism and climate-related and animal rights extremism in the case of this edition, it is because they did not pose a demonstrable threat of violence at the time of writing. If current events warrant further discussion, the NCTV may issue a separate report on the subject. Terrorist financing is dealt with in the DTN if there is a correlation to a violent threat to the Netherlands or its interests abroad.

The main purpose of the DTN is to aid in the formulation of strategy and policy at national level. The DTN is used to inform the government, members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, civil servants, administrators and policymakers at national and municipal level, academics and researchers, and other interested parties about the current threat to the Netherlands posed by terrorism and violent extremism.

Guide to this document

The DTN consists of the previous section, which sets the threat level and summarises the most important findings, and four sections that discuss the situation in greater depth. The fifth section, which is devoted to a different subject in each edition, explores a particular facet of the threat to the Netherlands posed by terrorism or violent extremism. The titles of the sections are as follows:

- Jihadism and radical Islam
- Right-wing terrorism and extremism
- Anti-institutional terrorism and extremism
- Left-wing extremism
- Special theme section: interaction between state actors and supporters of extremist movements
- Annexe 1 presents an overview of the most significant terrorist attacks and arrests for planning an attack in Europe between mid-December 2024 and early June 2025.
- Annexe 2: DTN threat levels

Key concepts

- **Accelerationism:** a right-wing extremist ideology centred on using terrorist violence to create chaos in order to precipitate a race war and hasten the replacement of the democratic system by a national socialist and white ethnostate.
- **Activism:** the efforts of individuals or groups to influence political decision-making through extra-parliamentary action which is within the bounds of the democratic legal order.
- **Democratic legal order:** a society in which the interaction between citizens and the government and among citizens themselves takes place in accordance with principles, procedures and institutions that are rooted in freedoms and rights enshrined in the constitution, specifically the rights of equality, freedom and participation. This is the open society that ensures, among other things, that everyone within the system can live freely and enjoys certain protections.
- **Extremism:** a willingness, grounded in a particular ideology, to engage in activities, whether violent or non-violent, that undermine the democratic legal order. Extremism can take both violent and non-violent forms. Some examples of non-violent undemocratic activities are: systematically inciting hatred; fostering a climate of fear; deliberately spreading disinformation; demonising and intimidating opponents; denouncing laws; and attempting to create a parallel society that rejects the authority of the Dutch government and legal system.
- **Ideological motive:** taking action on the basis of a particular world view in order to achieve a goal, whether general or specific. This goal might be something as vague as: 'things should be different from how they are now'. An ideological motive is distinct from a purely personal, criminal or financial motive.
- **Jihadism:** an abbreviation of 'global jihadist Salafism'. Through armed struggle, supporters of this ideological movement seek to replace 'apostate' governments in the Muslim world with a 'pure' Islamic state. To that end they commit terrorist attacks, including in Western countries. The jihadist movement consists of organisations such as al Qa'ida and ISIS and allied groups, plus networks and individual supporters around the world.
- **Terrorism:** the planning or perpetration of ideologically inspired acts of violence against people or of acts intended to cause property damage and calculated to result in social disruption, in order to create a climate of fear among the general public, achieve social change, and/or influence political decision-making.



Despite reports in the German media about a possible terrorist attack, the Festival der Liebe at Rotterdam Ahoy indoor arena went ahead as planned in March 2025. The concerns arose from a post on a German-language Islamic State website.

Chapter 1

Jihadism and radical islam

Jihadism continues to pose the most significant terrorist threat to Europe, and the biggest source of this threat by far comes from ISIS supporters. The jihadist threat to the Netherlands is still substantial and has not changed with respect to the DTN of December 2024. In the first half of 2025 there were a number of jihadist attacks, and the authorities arrested various people.

The last DTN noted that not only the number of jihadist attacks, but also the number of thwarted plans had increased since the previous period.³ This remains the case: the threat level continues to be high.

Jihadist attacks and arrests in Europe

Jihadist threat to Europe remains key factor in determining threat level in the Netherlands

Jihadism continues to pose the biggest terrorist threat to Europe. In 2024 there were dozens of arrests of suspected jihadist terrorists.⁴ Some of them may have had a radical Islamic background. In the first half of 2025, too, a number of people were arrested in the Netherlands on suspicion of committing a terrorist offence with a jihadist motive.⁵

ISIS remains the biggest source of the jihadist threat to Europe. Most jihadist attacks are carried out by lone perpetrators who are inspired by the ideology of ISIS but do not take direct orders from ISIS. Such attacks, while often simple to mount, can result in many fatalities. Consider two recent attacks in which perpetrators drove a vehicle into a crowd of people: New Orleans (1 January 2025) and Munich (13 February 2025). This is a method that ISIS has been recommending to its followers online for years, but it now seems to be catching on with others as well (see the inset 'Vehicular attacks inspire copycats').

³ See also 'Global Terrorism Index 2025: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism', Institute for Economics & Peace, March 2025, p. 2.

⁴ NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, December 2024, p. 5.

⁵ See, for example, Public Prosecution Service, '14 aanhoudingen in verband met opruiing tot terrorisme op sociale media' (14 arrests in connection with terrorist incitement on social media), 22 April 2025.

Vehicular attacks inspire copycats, including non-jihadist extremists

On 3 March, a 40-year-old man drove into a group of people celebrating Carnival in Mannheim (Germany), killing two. He drove his car at high speed through a pedestrian zone in the city centre, hitting several revellers. Following Magdeburg (21 December 2024) and Munich (13 February 2025) this incident in Mannheim was the third vehicle attack in Germany within the space of several weeks. Starting in the 2010s ISIS-inspired jihadists in particular used vehicles as a weapon on various occasions.⁶ This was strongly encouraged in propaganda produced by ISIS and al Qa'ida.⁷

However, the perpetrators of the three recent attacks in Germany would seem to have little in common, ideologically speaking. The attack in Magdeburg is believed to have been carried out by an anti-Islam activist; the perpetrator of the Munich attack is thought to possibly have ties to ISIS; and the Mannheim attacker appears to be suffering from a psychological disorder and may have a right-wing extremist background. It would seem that this *modus operandi* inspires copycat behaviour among others who are harbouring societal grievances of their own, of whatever sort.⁸ A vehicle can easily be acquired and as a weapon it can cause many casualties.

Attacks carried out by lone actors can be difficult for the authorities to detect. The perpetrators are often young people who have become radicalised online. Some attacks are carried out by people who are living in Europe as refugees or (failed) asylum seekers.⁹ It is striking that most attackers with a migrant background do not become radicalised until they have been living in Europe for a few years. Only a minority of them held extremist views when they were still living in their country of origin.

Thanks to the work of the authorities and international cooperation, most planned attacks are discovered in time. The number of large-scale and complex attacks therefore remains relatively limited.

Many attackers and aspiring attackers are not particularly concerned about their choice of target. Rather, they tend to be pragmatic in that regard and seem to be fairly comfortable with substituting one target for another. That said, there is a marked preference for attacks on targets with symbolic value, which will attract media attention or have a major impact on society. For this reason, Jewish and Israeli individuals and sites will in all likelihood remain a target, regardless of how the war in Gaza proceeds. The same probably applies to representatives of the state. In the eyes of jihadists they are symbols of a 'godless state' that is hostile to Muslims. In addition, people whom jihadists accuse of profaning Islam, the prophet Mohammed or the Quran are, in their eyes, legitimate targets. Further investigation will have to reveal what the background is of the murderer of

⁶ 'Into the Crowd: the Evolution of Vehicular Attacks and Prevention Efforts', Alexandre Rodde and Justin Olmstead, *CTC Sentinel*, Volume 18, Issue 3, March 2025, pp. 45-49.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁹ In May 2024 a person was killed in an attack in Mannheim by an Afghan man who had come to Germany in 2013 as an asylum seeker; in August 2024 three people were killed in an attack by a Syrian asylum seeker who was supposed to have been expelled to Bulgaria. In February 2025 an Afghan man who had come to Germany as an asylum seeker while still a minor carried out an attack in Munich. Later that month a minor was killed in a knife attack by a Syrian refugee, and in Berlin another Syrian refugee wounded a person with a knife.

the man behind the Quran-burning protests in Sweden (see inset ‘Alleged blasphemy provokes attacks’).

Alleged blasphemy provokes attacks, even decades later

On 29 January the well-known critic of Islam Salwan Momika was shot dead in the Swedish town of Södertälje.¹⁰ It is as yet unknown who murdered Momika, and the attack has not yet been claimed. Even so, supporters of al Qa’ida, ISIS and other groups celebrated his death as a just punishment for blasphemy.¹¹

In 2023 public burnings of the Quran by Momika, who was originally from Iraq, led to an international outcry and acts of violence, including against the Swedish embassy in Iraq. Jihadists used these protests in their anti-Western propaganda. Partly in response to this, various Western countries, including the Netherlands, raised their threat level.¹² Such acts of blasphemy can lead not only to a direct threat against the anti-Islam critics themselves; they can also contribute to the threat against countries where these individuals live or are active, and to the threat against the West in general. This is also an issue in the Netherlands, even though the government condemns the Quran burnings. For example, in November 2024 an 18-year-old resident of Eindhoven was arrested on suspicion of preparing attacks on the head of Pegida and other targets.¹³ Currently, however, there are no concrete indications that Momika’s death will lead to a heightened threat against critics of Islam in the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, critics of Islam, including politicians such as Geert Wilders, have been systematically threatened for years. In recent years multiple attacks have been carried out in retaliation for blasphemy, such as the assault on the editorial board of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in 2015, the murder of the French teacher Samuel Paty in 2020 and the knife attack on a critic of Islam in Mannheim in 2024.

Crowds are another attractive target for jihadists because, as a soft target, they are relatively easy to strike, and this type of attack can result in a large number of casualties. One example of this occurred in Mulhouse, France in February 2025, when a man stabbed multiple people at a market.

ISIS provinces continue to pose a threat

Over the past few years organisational changes at ISIS have raised the threat that jihadism poses to Europe. In brief the organisation has regionalised. It now consists of multiple regional subdivisions, often called ‘provinces’, which focus on various activities and sometimes work together. For example, they seek to control territory, combat regional opponents, generate and distribute income, make and disseminate propaganda and encourage or organise attacks outside their own region. The majority of the attacks still take place in the group’s own province, however. Some activities are coordinated by leading figures within ISIS. This threat assessment is mainly concerned with the

¹⁰ ‘Koranverbrander Momika doodgeschoten in Zweden’ (Quran burner Momika shot dead in Sweden), NOS, 30 January 2025.

¹¹ SITE Intelligence, ‘“Salwan Is Dead But Many More Salwans Are Alive” – Radicals of All Kinds Celebrate Murder of Qur’an Burner in Sweden’, 31 January 2025.

¹² NCTV, *Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands*, December 2023, p. 16.

¹³ ‘Scholier (18) verdacht van voorbereiding terreuraanslagen op Pegida-voorman en Tweede Kamer’ (High-school student (18) suspected of preparing terror attacks on Pegida head and parliament), AD, 24 February 2025.

external threat (i.e. the ordering or encouragement of attacks outside the group's own region) and with provinces that are attracting jihadist travellers from Western countries.¹⁴

ISKP remains the biggest threat to Western Europe

Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) operates mainly in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but it has an international agenda and also seeks to strike the West. Of all the ISIS provinces, ISKP still poses the biggest threat to Western Europe.¹⁵ Despite increased counterterrorism operations on the part of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the group remains resilient and capable of carrying out or ordering attacks not only in the region but also outside it.¹⁶

First, ISKP attempts to radicalise people online and to incite them to commit violence (see inset). ISKP produces material in many languages including English.¹⁷ For example, Al-Azaim, ISKP's official media outlet, published a poster online in January 2025 calling for attacks on specific targets in the West.¹⁸ One possible target mentioned was the Amsterdam Dance Event.¹⁹ Al-Azaim was placed on the EU terrorism list on 17 March 2025.²⁰

An unofficial pamphlet also designated the Festival der Liebe in Rotterdam as a potential target. Online calls to action of this sort, in which ISIS-affiliated or pro-ISIS media channels suggest potential targets for attacks in the West to their followers, are not unusual. If someone ends up taking up such a call to action, it is all too common for the media to propagate the narrative that the attack was planned by ISIS. There are no examples in Europe of an attack on a specific target that occurred immediately after the target in question was mentioned by a jihadist channel. Nevertheless, ISKP and others continue to spread this kind of propaganda in order to inspire lone individuals to action.

Second, ISKP makes use of semi-autonomous networks from Central Asia or the Caucasus which have been in Europe for some time and which specifically seek to recruit followers among the Central Asian and Afghan diaspora.²¹ ISKP's capacity to strike targets in Europe also largely depends on the extent to which local support networks within the diaspora communities are available in the individual countries.²²

¹⁴ For a more in-depth consideration of the subject, see: NCTV, *Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands*, December 2024, special theme section: 'Islamic State in flux'.

¹⁵ C. Clarke, L. Webber and P. Smith, 'ISKP's Latest Campaign: Expanded Propaganda and External Operations', *Global Network on Extremism & Technology*, 27 June 2024.

¹⁶ R. Gardiner, 'The shifting threat: Islamist militancy in 2025, *Political Violence Special Edition 2025*', S-RM GSI, 22 January 2025.

¹⁷ C. Clarke, L. Webber and P. Smith, 'ISKP's Latest Campaign'.

¹⁸ 'Van Amsterdam Dance Event tot Oktoberfest in München: terreurgroep ISKP publiceert nieuwe doelwitten in Europa en VS' (From Amsterdam Dance Event to Oktoberfest in Munich: terror group ISKP publishes new targets in Europe and the US), *Nieuwsblad*, 16 January 2025.

¹⁹ *Ibid*; 'Nächstes Angriffsziel: Islamisten drohen mit Anschlag auf Kölner Karneval!' (Next target for an attack: Islamists threaten to attack Carnival in Cologne!), *Bild*, 25 February 2025.

²⁰ 'ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda – the Council adds one entity to its autonomous list of sanctions', Council of the EU, 18/025, 17 March 2025. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/nl/press/press-releases/2025/03/17/isil-da-esh-and-al-qaeda-the-council-adds-one-entity-to-its-autonomous-list-of-sanctions>.

²¹ NCTV, *Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands*, December 2024, p. 41.

²² *Ibid*.

Third, individuals from or with a link to Europe who travel to ISKP in Afghanistan and Pakistan can also pose a threat. The NCTV has addressed this issue in recent years in previous editions of the DTN.²³ Besides deploying these individuals to the jihadist conflict in the region, ISKP can also use them for the purpose of recruitment, the production or dissemination of propaganda or the facilitation of potential jihadist travellers.²⁴

Finally, it should be borne in mind that ISKP is sending attackers to the West, in the same way that its mother organisation ISIS did during the time of the 'caliphate', from its bases of operations in Syria and Iraq. Thus far, the NCTV is not aware of any examples of this in Europe.

The long arm of ISKP

ISKP also wishes to strike the United States, as witness the arrest of a 27-year-old Afghan in late 2024 on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack on the day of the US presidential election.²⁵ He was arrested after buying two AK-47 assault rifles and ammunition from an undercover police officer posing as an arms dealer. Together with his underaged brother-in-law, the suspect sought to shoot at crowds during the US presidential election. He wanted to 'die a martyr', he stated during questioning. He is thought to have been rapidly radicalised the previous year by the ideology of ISIS. US authorities announced that the perpetrator was acting under orders from ISKP.²⁶ As yet, little is known about how this occurred. This is the first known ISKP plot in the US. The case illustrates the organisation's increased global range over the past two years.

Anders dan ISKP krijgt Al Qa'ida in Afghanistan meer bewegingsruimte van het bevriende Taliban-regime.²⁷ Desalniettemin krijgt de organisatie van het regime weinig ruimte om haar mondiale agenda ten uitvoer te brengen en op het Westen gerichte aanslagen voor te bereiden.²⁸

²³ NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, June 2024, p. 26.

²⁴ A.Y. Zelin, 'ISKP Goes Global: External Operations from Afghanistan', Washington Institute, 11 September 2023.

²⁵ 'Afghaan in VS gearresteerd om aanslagplannen voor verkiezingsdag' (Afghan in US arrested for planning election day attack), NOS, 9 October 2024.

²⁶ 'ISIS-K behind foiled Election Day terrorism plot, U.S. officials say', NBC News, 15 October 2024.

²⁷ 'Thirty-fifth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities', United Nations Security Council, S/2025/71/Rev.1, p.17, 6 februari 2025.

²⁸ 'Al Qaeda: Background, currents status, and US Policy', Congressional Research Service, 6 mei 2024.

Threat to the West posed by ISIS Syria and ISIS Somalia appears to have decreased somewhat

ISIS seeks to expand its international network and activities. Over the past few years the group's organisational centre of gravity has partially shifted from the Middle East to other ISIS provinces, such as ISIS Somalia. While ISIS in Syria has become less dominant, it remains important. Not all activities and not all provinces are equally relevant from the perspective of the threat to the Netherlands. In the Sahel, for example, jihadist groups have been active for decades, and they continue to grow in size. Yet there are few if any signs that these groups are organising and encouraging attacks in Europe.

Other provinces are, however, doing just that. In recent years attack plans in Germany, France and Sweden have been traced to ISIS branches in Somalia, Syria and Iraq.²⁹ In addition, it is relatively easy for jihadists in Western countries to come into contact with media organisations associated with ISIS provinces. Members of those provinces then encourage jihadists in Western countries to carry out attacks and often to release a martyrdom video beforehand. Conversely, the media organisations actively seek to recruit jihadists in Europe.

ISIS Somalia

According to estimates by local authorities, ISIS Somalia has grown to around a thousand members.³⁰ New recruits are mainly from Africa, though there are also some from the Middle East. The development of ISIS Somalia is relevant to the jihadist threat in Europe for two reasons: in various European countries, including the Netherlands, there are jihadists who intend to travel to Somalia for jihadist purposes.³¹ In addition, ISIS Somalia can be linked to a number of planned attacks in Europe.³² At the same time, ISIS has come under pressure as a result of US air strikes and military action by the authorities of Puntland.³³ It is as yet unclear whether these actions succeeded in disrupting ISIS Somalia's capabilities for external attack planning over the long term.

ISIS Syria

In recent years ISIS Syria had been undergoing a resurgence, which air strikes by the US and France already aimed to combat, even before the fall of the Assad regime. ISIS sought to exploit the fragile relations between various religious and ethnic groups in the country. In early January 2025, Syrian security authorities claimed that a bomb attack on a Shiite shrine by ISIS in Damascus had been prevented.³⁴ It is likely that ISIS will try to liberate ISIS fighters from detention centres in northeastern Syria, as they did with the attack on Sinaa Prison in January 2022. Since Ha'yat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) took power in Syria, ISIS Syria has as yet not attacked any prisons in northeastern Syria.

²⁹ NCTV, *Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands*, December 2024, special theme section: 'Islamic State in flux'.

³⁰ 'The Islamic State has regrouped in Somalia – and has global ambitions', *The Washington Post*, 11 February 2025.

³¹ NCTV, *Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands*, December 2024, pp. 18-19.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³³ 'Over 20 killed in clash between security forces, Islamic State fighters in Somalia', *Voice of America*, 22 January 2025; 'Update: U.S. Forces Strike on ISIS-Somalia', press release from U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs, 11 February 2025.

³⁴ 'Syrian intelligence agency says it thwarted a planned Islamic State attack on a Shiite shrine', *AP*, 11 January 2025.

In late 2024 and early 2025, France and the US carried out new air strikes against ISIS in Syria. It is as yet unclear whether these air strikes succeeded in weakening ISIS's ability to mount external attacks over the long term.

Jihadist travellers from the Netherlands in Syria

In the HTS-controlled part of Syria, there are still around 25 adult jihadist travellers from the Netherlands.³⁵ Some of them have joined HTS. It is currently unlikely that Dutch jihadist travellers in northwestern Syria intend to return to the Netherlands. Moreover, they probably assume they would be sent to prison and would therefore be separated from their children for some time. HTS is considering granting foreign fighters Syrian nationality. It is conceivable that this may happen with some of the jihadist travellers from the Netherlands as well.³⁶

HTS poses only a minimal threat to West

In December 2024 a coalition of rebel groups led by HTS ousted the Assad regime. HTS is on the UN list of terrorist groups,³⁷ which was adopted by the EU.³⁸ This listing is partly due to the fact that the organisation's predecessor maintained ties with al Qa'ida. HTS broke with al Qa'ida in 2017. What is more, HTS has said that it no longer has a global jihadist agenda, but that it is instead following a nationalist course, which is focused on building a new Syrian state.³⁹ It is very likely that HTS does not have an agenda for external attacks and currently does not pose a terrorist threat to the West.⁴⁰

However, within the ranks of HTS, there are still an unknown number of individuals and groups who continue to embrace jihadist ideas. In addition, it is a matter of concern that many foreign jihadist fighters can move around Syria freely.⁴¹ It is conceivable that elements outside of HTS's control could develop attack plans on Western targets.⁴²

In addition, there are around 15 Dutch men in detention in northeastern Syria and around five women and 25 minors with a link to the Netherlands in reception camps.⁴³ In general they pose a greater threat if they are released because unlike many jihadist travellers in northwestern Syria, they were in ISIS. Moreover, their long captivity under harsh conditions could lead to feelings of resentment against the West. A number of Dutch jihadist travellers in Syrian-Kurdish detention centres have expressed a desire to return to the Netherlands.⁴⁴

There is a fear that ISIS supporters could escape from the prisons or camps (either on their own or with help). Given the current situation in Syria, it is uncertain whether the Syrian Democratic

³⁵ AIVD website, 'Uitreizigers en terugkeerders' (Jihadist travellers and returnees), s.d., consulted on 18 February 2025.

³⁶ Sebastian Usher, 'Foreign fighters given senior Army posts, reports say', BBC, 31 December 2024. 'Jolani speaks to 5Pillars about Israel, foreign fighters, the Ummah and the new Syria', *5Pillars*, 17 December 2024.

³⁷ United Nations Security Council, United Nations Security Council Consolidated List, consulted on 1 April 2025.

³⁸ European Commission, 'Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/855 of 8 June 2018 amending for the 286th time Council Regulation (EC) No 881/2002 imposing certain specific restrictive measures directed against certain persons and entities associated with the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida organisations', 8 June 2018.

³⁹ A. Zelin, *The Age of Political Jihadism: a Study of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham*, 2023.

⁴⁰ NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, December 2024, p. 26. A. Zelin, *The Age of Political Jihadism*, 2023.

⁴¹ 'Foreign fighters with Hay'at Tahrir Al Sham and the "Bosnia Model"', *Jordan Times*, 20 January 2025. Many other articles also describe the practice of promoting and conferring nationality on foreign fighters.

⁴² 'Quand l'assassin de Samuel Paty rêvait de rejoindre les rebelles islamistes de HTS en Syrie' (When the murderer of Samuel Paty dreamt of joining the Islamist rebels of HTS in Syria), *Le Point*, 9 December 2024.

⁴³ AIVD, 'Uitreizigers en terugkeerders'.

⁴⁴ For more on this, see the documentary *Inside Kalifaat* by Sinan Can.

Forces (SDF) can guarantee that the detention centres and camps will continue to be guarded. The possible suspension of military support and foreign aid from the US will likely also entail certain security risks. Recently, however, the SDF have stated that they are well prepared to thwart escape attempts and guarantee security in northeastern Syria.⁴⁵

On 10 March 2025 the Syrian interim government concluded an agreement with the SDF, under which the interim government will take control of the Kurdish region in the northeast of the country.⁴⁶ It is possible that over the long term the interim government will also take over guarding the prisons where male ISIS fighters are being held.

The Dutch jihadist movement

A segment of the jihadist community in the Netherlands is mainly active online, where they consume and share extremist and terrorist propaganda amongst themselves. In these online groups consisting of like-minded individuals, radicalisation can occur quickly because there is no one to offer any pushback, and extremist language is actually rewarded with likes and words of encouragement. Transnational terrorist organisations, such as ISIS, take advantage of this by spreading propaganda in these kinds of groups and using them as a pool from which to recruit. Often these are young people, mainly boys, who are trying to find an identity and a source of meaning in their lives. Although this is certainly not the case for all young people active within jihadist circles, in many cases these youths suffer from psychiatric or psychosocial problems, a lack of self-control and a craving for excitement and/or an urge to engage in provocative behaviour. This makes them easier to influence and more susceptible to violence and extremism. When searching online, they can relatively easily end up in jihadist groups and chats, which encourage hatred towards others and pride in one's own group. Some of these are also part of online jihadist networks of young people from the Netherlands and abroad.

These networks consist mostly of young males, mainly teenagers and young adults, who have little or no connection to the older, established jihadist networks.⁴⁷ Some of these young people struggle with psychiatric and/or psychosocial issues. This can make them more susceptible to (rapid) radicalisation.⁴⁸ Girls and women are also active, albeit to a lesser extent.

There is a risk that one of them could commit an act of violence in the Netherlands. In March the police arrested a 20-year-old Syrian from Rotterdam. The man is suspected of participating in a terrorist organisation and plotting a terrorist attack.⁴⁹ In late February the police arrested a Syrian asylum seeker from Venray on suspicion of involvement in threatening a terrorist offence and disseminating inflammatory writings. Among other things, the man shared jihadist material on

⁴⁵ 'VOA Kurdish: SDF secure and protect al-Hol Camp', VOA News, 12 February 2025.

⁴⁶ 'Syrische regering breidt macht uit dankzij deal met Koerden' (Syrian government expands its power thanks to deal with the Kurds), NOS, 10 March 2025.

⁴⁷ NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, December 2024, p. 18.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁴⁹ Dutch Police, '20-jarige man aangehouden op verdenking van terrorisme' (20-year-old man arrested on suspicion of terrorism), 11 March 2025.

TikTok, where he had thousands of followers.⁵⁰ The man's pre-trial detention has since been suspended by the court, subject to certain conditions. He is being examined by the Netherlands Institute of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology.

The virtual caliphate

A certain amount of the jihadist propaganda is produced by ISIS provinces which then disseminate it via their official media channels. In addition, in recent years there has been substantial growth in the number of ISIS supporters who spread terrorist propaganda via non-official media channels. Some of these online jihadists make new content of their own, but they more commonly make use of old ISIS content, which they recycle or modify. Pro-ISIS channels use both public, mainstream platforms and more private groups on messaging apps. The goal is to keep the ideology of ISIS alive despite the fact that ISIS has not existed as a physical 'caliphate' since 2019. Although ISIS is spreading its propaganda activities out over more and more branches and regions, the organisation's global ideology is converging into a single digital ecosystem.⁵¹

Social media platforms and government bodies such as police and intelligence and security services are engaged in a never-ending game of cat and mouse with jihadist groups and individuals in an attempt to take down jihadist content. However, jihadist groups and individuals are always devising new strategies to circumvent content moderation and to get deleted terrorist material and cancelled accounts back online.⁵² The decision by a number of social media platforms to pay less attention to content moderation will probably only complicate efforts to combat online terrorist content.⁵³ In recent years, jihadist material has found its way onto more and more platforms and is available in more and more languages.⁵⁴

Online, it is relatively easy for ISIS supporters to come into contact with jihadist elements in ISIS provinces. Such online interactions can prompt ISIS supporters in the Netherlands to disseminate jihadist propaganda, raise money, depart for a jihadist conflict zone or mount an attack.⁵⁵

The jihadist movement in the Netherlands also consists of physical networks, some of which have existed for decades, concentrated in a number of the country's large cities. For a few years now, it has been rare for members of these physical networks to be arrested for jihadist activity (e.g. spreading propaganda, travelling to a jihadist conflict zone or preparing an attack). Many of them have entered a different stage of life and would now appear to be focusing on other things besides the ideological struggle.

In addition to the new generation of online jihadists and the more established networks, it is also possible to distinguish other groups within the jihadist movement. For example, only a very small number of people are part of transnational jihadist networks, which are connected to ISIS

⁵⁰ Public Prosecution Service, 'Man uit Venray aangehouden vanwege verdenking terrorisme' (Venray man arrested on suspicion of terrorism), 28 February 2025.

⁵¹ ISD, 'A decade after the "Caliphate": the state of the Islamic State online', 12 February 2025.

⁵² Moustafa Ayad, 'Teenage Terrorists and the Digital Ecosystem of the Islamic State', *CTC Sentinel*, Volume 18, Issue 2, February 2025.

⁵³ 'Meta, Facebook to drop fact-checkers: What does this mean for social media?', *Al Jazeera English*, 10 January 2025.

⁵⁴ ISD, 'A decade after the "Caliphate": the state of the Islamic State online', 12 February 2025.

⁵⁵ NCTV, *Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands*, December 2024, p. 20.

structures in Afghanistan, Syria and Türkiye. Because of their ties to and experience with international terrorist networks they have a higher threat profile than many other jihadists in the Netherlands.⁵⁶

Detention in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, individuals suspected or convicted of terrorist offences are held separately from other prisoners, in special terrorist wings. The Dutch system of concentrated detention is meant to prevent terrorists from influencing or recruiting other prisoners. This type of detention can nevertheless lead to the formation of new networks if prisoners who did not previously know each other establish ties. Thus far the threat of violence posed by individuals formerly held in these terrorist wings of Dutch prisons has remained limited. However, as of this year a number of the convicted terrorists scheduled for release from prison have a higher threat profile than many of those previously released.

The – in some cases imminent – release of convicted terrorists in other countries can also have repercussions for the Netherlands because despite supervisory measures elsewhere, these individuals are generally free to travel through the Schengen area and can be in contact with Dutch jihadists.⁵⁷ Following a final and unappealable conviction for a terrorist offence, an individual with dual nationality can, in some cases, have their Dutch nationality revoked.

To date, most convicted terrorists who have been released from prison and whose Dutch nationality has been revoked have still not left the country. As they are living illegally in the Netherlands, they often do not have a fixed address, making it more difficult for the authorities to monitor them.

In the past few years an increasing number of minors have been arrested in connection with terrorist offences.⁵⁸ If placed in detention, they will in principle be held in a young offender institution. In late April, 14 individuals, most of them minors, were arrested in connection with incitement to terrorism on social media. On TikTok and other platforms they allegedly encouraged others to commit terrorist offences. They are believed to support and propagate jihadist ideology.

⁵⁶ NCTV, *Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands*, December 2024, p. 10.

⁵⁷ NCTV, *Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands*, December 2024, pp. 10-11. NCTV, *Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands*, June 2024, p. 21.

⁵⁸ In principle they will not be held in the specialised terrorist wings but rather in a young offender institution.



A municipal worker removes severed pig's feet from the gate of the property where the municipality of Sint-Michielsgestel is planning to establish an asylum seekers' centre.

Chapter 2

Rechts-wing terrorism and extremism

Deep concerns remain about rapid online radicalisation in right-wing terrorist online networks and the threat of violence they pose, especially in the youth demographic. Because it is difficult to monitor such individuals, they can continue to become radicalised outside the view of the authorities.

The Dutch right-wing extremist scene is mainly inspired by identitarianism,⁵⁹ Nazism and ultra-nationalism. They seek to normalise right-wing extremist ideology and protect the ‘white race’. This takes place both in an organised context and under the guidance of certain influential individuals. They increasingly seek cooperation with other right-wing extremists, both in the Netherlands and abroad. Right-wing extremists around the world have the feeling that the tide is turning to their advantage, and as they gain greater social acceptance, most of them are swearing off violence, at least publicly. Nonetheless, in Western democracies, including the Netherlands, there have been violent incidents connected to right-wing extremism.

Rechts-wing terrorism

Violent threat posed by right-wing terrorism unchanged, concerns about radicalisation of young people

The violent threat posed by online right-wing terrorist circles remains largely unchanged in the Netherlands. It is possible that individuals or small groups that are active in those circles could commit terrorist violence. That is thought to have been the case with an attack in southern France on 31 May. During this period there have also been multiple arrests for inciting hate or criminal offences and making preparations for a terrorist offence. In January of this year, for example, a 14-year-old boy was arrested in Belgium because he was seeking to carry out an attack on a mosque. This youth has Nazi sympathies and is a member of a right-wing extremist movement.⁶⁰ In March,

⁵⁹ Seeking to preserve every country’s national identity and bring about the ‘remigration’ of anyone who does not fit in with that.

⁶⁰ ‘Jongen (14) met extreemrechtse sympathieën opgepakt voor beramen van aanslag op moskee: wapens gevonden bij huiszoeking’ (Boy (14) with far-right sympathies arrested for preparing attack on mosque: weapons found in search of his home), VRT Nieuws, 23 January 2025; ‘Belgische jongen van 14 opgepakt die aanslag op moskee wilde plegen’ (Fourteen-year-old Belgian boy who wanted to attack mosque arrested), NOS, 23 January 2025; Public Prosecution Service, ‘Parket van de procureur des Konings van Brussel – Persbericht: terroristische dreiging’ (Office of the Public Prosecutor in Brussels – press release: terrorist threat), 23 January 2025.

three youths (now 17, 19 and 26) who were arrested in the Netherlands in the summer of 2024 were given suspended prison and youth detention sentences.⁶¹ They were found guilty of, among other things, incitement with terrorist intent, partly on the basis of messages in right-wing extremist group chats. The minor of the three was also convicted of taking part in the right-wing terrorist organisation The Base. Restrictions were imposed on the three individuals' social media use as well.⁶²

On 1 April 2025 a 25-year-old man from Nieuwegein was arrested on suspicion of involvement in terrorist offences. The criminal investigation that led to the arrest was prompted by information provided by the AIVD. The man is believed to espouse right-wing extremist ideology and see himself as part of the struggle.⁶³

In the Netherlands and other Western countries there are serious concerns about the number of young people active in online right-wing terrorist networks and the swiftness with which some of them are becoming radicalised.⁶⁴ Often, as with the three convicted youths referenced above, these are young people, mainly boys, who are trying to find an identity and a source of meaning in their lives. Although this is certainly not the case for all young people active within right-wing terrorist circles, in many cases these youths – like their counterparts in jihadist circles – suffer from psychiatric and/or psychosocial problems, a lack of self-control and a craving for excitement or an urge to engage in provocative behaviour. This makes them easier to influence and more susceptible to violence and extremism. When searching online it is relatively easy for them to end up in right-wing extremist groups and chats, which encourage hatred towards others and pride in one's own group. In these places they also come into contact with violent and terrorist content. In these online groups consisting of like-minded parties, radicalisation can occur quickly because there is no one to offer any pushback, and extremist language is actually rewarded with likes and words of encouragement. Transnational terrorist organisations, such as The Base, take advantage of this by spreading propaganda in these kinds of online groups and using them as a pool from which to recruit. In the case of the convicted 17-year-old, this inspired him to found a Dutch branch of The Base ('De Basis'), in which both a recruiter from The Base and very young adolescents (12- and 13-year-olds) were active.⁶⁵

⁶¹ ECLI:NL:RBROT:2025:3480.

⁶² NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, December 2024, p. 23; Royal Military and Border Police, 'Tactisch Beeld CTER februari 2025 t.b.v. DTN' (Tactical assessment of counterterrorism efforts for the purpose of the DTN), February 2025; 'Nederlandse tiener verdacht van deelname extreemrechtse terreurgroep The Base' (Dutch teen suspected of participating in far-right terrorist group The Base), NOS, 5 September 2024; 'Drietal extreemrechtse jongeren schuldig bevonden aan opruiing via Telegram' (Three far-right youths found guilty of incitement via Telegram), *De Volkskrant*, 17 March 2025; 'Extreemrechtse verdachten voor de rechter in Rotterdam: "Ik was toen best wel racistisch"' (Far-right suspects in court: 'I was pretty racist then'), *De Volkskrant*, 3 March 2025. See also the inset below about the decision to add The Base to lists of terrorist organisations.

⁶³ Public Prosecution Service, 'Man uit Nieuwegein aangehouden op verdenking terrorisme' (Nieuwegein man arrested on suspicion of terrorism), 4 April 2025.

⁶⁴ The same concerns exist about the activities of young people within online jihadist networks. See also: NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, December 2024.

⁶⁵ 'Afglijden van gedachte naar geweld' (The downward spiral from thinking to violence), *De Volkskrant*, 1 March 2025 (with research on the basis of public sources by the collective Capitol Terrorists Exposers); for a more in-depth explanation of the radicalisation mechanism, see also AIVD, 'Een web van haat – De online grip van extremisme en terrorisme op minderjarigen' (A web of hate: the grip of online extremism and terrorism on minors), 3 April 2025, pp. 6-9 and Verwey-Jonker Institute, 'Rechtsextremisme op sociale media platforms?' (Right-wing extremism on social media platforms?), 10 October 2023, pp. 28-38 and 104-105.

The Base and The Terrorgram Collective added to terrorism lists

The Base and The Terrorgram Collective are examples of transnational right-wing (online) terrorist organisations/networks. The former group includes Dutch people among its members. Dutch people are involved in The Terrorgram Collective as well. Both play a major role in disseminating accelerationist ideas.⁶⁶ Since last year The Base has been on both the national terrorism sanctions list and the European list of terrorist organisations.⁶⁷ The Terrorgram Collective was listed by both the UK (April 2024) and the US (January 2025).⁶⁸ It is not on the lists of either the Netherlands or the European Union. The sanctions measures entail the freezing of financial assets and a prohibition on financially or economically supporting these groups or networks. Despite these measures, there are signs that The Base has been experiencing a resurgence since the new US administration took office, as the present government considers combating right-wing extremism less of a priority than did its predecessor.⁶⁹

Difficulty in detection limits authorities' ability to monitor members of right-wing terrorist networks

In total there are an estimated several hundred Dutch people active in the online right-wing terrorist milieu, most of whom are minors and young adults. Although they sporadically meet in person in small groups, they are mainly active online. They often belong to multiple group chats, easily moving between them, and they tend to be active on various online platforms. New group chats are created all the time, some of which claim to have members in the Netherlands. This makes it more difficult to obtain an exact sense of these circles in the Netherlands and of people who are active in these networks.

Members of right-wing terrorist networks regularly create their own violent, ideologically fragmented belief systems. Online, they can rapidly and easily absorb and spread content from various ideological movements.⁷⁰ They pick and choose what appeals to them and then incorporate it into their own world view,⁷¹ drawing inspiration not only from various right-wing extremist ideologies, such as accelerationism, Nazism or white supremacy, but also elements from the 'incelosphere',⁷² ecofascism and occultism.⁷³ Some individuals from right-wing terrorist circles thus incorporate a fascination with violence into their world view. This fascination is encouraged in online gore networks, where members share extremely violent images of attacks, murders, animal abuse and

⁶⁶ The idea that an inevitable race war must be accelerated by means of attacks and other forms of violence. Only then will the 'white race' be able to win this war, while it still is in the majority, and thus establish a white ethnostate in which there is no place for other 'races'.

⁶⁷ NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, December 2024, p. 24.

⁶⁸ 'Terrorgram added to list of proscribed terrorist organisations', gov.uk, 22 April 2024; US Department of State, 'Terrorist Designations of The Terrorgram Collective and Three Leaders', 13 January 2025.

⁶⁹ 'Neo-Nazi group plots rebuild as Trump's FBI chief takes helm, audio reveals', *The Guardian*, 24 February 2025.

⁷⁰ L. Brace, S.J. Baele and D. Ging, 'Where do "mixed, unclear, and unstable" ideologies come from?: A data-driven answer centred on the incelosphere', *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 26 June 2023, pp. 119-120.

⁷¹ M. Dryden, 'An Ideological Pick 'n' Mix: The Rise of "Mixed" Ideologies & Their Implications for Terrorist Violence', Centre on Radicalisation and Terrorism, March 2021 pp. 1-11; C. Allen, 'Extreme far right: "pick 'n' mix" ideologies and direct messaging online make for deadly new combination', *The Conversation*, 9 March 2019; "'Pick-n-mix" ideologies: Why violent motivations are becoming harder to define', Sky News, 28 January 2025.

⁷² Incel is a portmanteau of 'involuntarily celibate'. The men – and it is largely men – who consider themselves incels hold 'the system' responsible for their lack of sexual and romantic relationships. Their hatred is focused on both women and the establishment.

⁷³ NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, June 2024, p. 26. Occultism deals with the part of the supernatural world associated with darkness; the devil or Satan play a prominent role. See the inset below on occultism. According to the tenets of ecofascism, the harmony between white people and nature has been lost due, for example, to mass immigration, globalisation and capitalism; the only solution is to stop immigration or eradicate non-white population groups.

sexual violence.⁷⁴ Some right-wing terrorist organisations are active on and recruit on gore websites.⁷⁵ The frequent consumption of these explicit images fuels visitors' violent fantasies and can lead to desensitisation, a negative view of humanity and an aversion to society. It can also lead to dehumanisation of certain population groups which are seen as scapegoats and possibly to a lower threshold for the use of violence against those groups.⁷⁶

The fascination with violence and the ideological cross-pollination in combination with psychiatric and/or psychosocial problems and rapid radicalisation make it difficult for the relevant institutions to conduct a full and proper assessment of the nature and extent of the problem.

The need to be alert to niche groups with an occult world view within right-wing terrorist circles

In the Netherlands, as in the US for example, there are indications that young people, particularly those from online right-wing terrorist circles are combining their fascination with violence with occult beliefs, such as Satanism. Occult beliefs are not necessarily violent, but in combination with right-wing extremist ideology, they are used for propaganda purposes and for encouraging others to commit violence. These individuals mix Nazi ideology with mystical and occult traditions and symbols, focused on the superiority of the 'Aryan' or white race.⁷⁷ Groups such as the Order of Nine Angles, 764 and Maniacs Murder Cult are fixated on random violence and chaos and on the collapse of society. They call this outlook 'tactical nihilism': destruction for its own sake. Within international right-wing terrorist circles occultism is controversial, and there is resistance to the influence of these shady occult groups. Their influence is mostly limited to a few online networks. In the Netherlands the violent threat posed by right-wing terrorist occult groups is limited. That said, it is necessary to remain alert if Dutch people who are active in these transnational right-wing terrorist networks come into contact with their violent content and incorporate influences from this niche subculture into their own violent world view. The converse is also true: it is important to stay alert to the possibility that individuals with a fascination for violence could come into contact with these extremist groups

Right-wing extremism

Unlike right-wing terrorists, most Dutch right-wing extremists currently advocate a non-violent path towards the white ethnostate they envision. By normalising their ideas, they seek to achieve a dominant societal and political position from which to build a white ethnostate. But to bring about this ethnostate they want to deport millions of people on the basis of their race, faith, sexual orientation or 'unacceptable' beliefs, something that cannot be done without the use of violence. It is troubling that politicians and large swathes of society are becoming increasingly comfortable with terms like 'remigration', which is used by right-wing extremists to refer to their deportation plans. Ultimately, the normalisation of right-wing extremist ideas could lead to right-wing extremist violence.

⁷⁴ AIVD website, consulted on 14 January 2025.

⁷⁵ NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, December 2024, p. 24; J. Hardy and C. Stewart, 'Gore and violent extremism: How extremist groups exploit "gore" sites to view and share terrorist material', Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 29 June 2023.

⁷⁶ S. Purdue, 'Ideological Nihilism and Aesthetic Violence: Mass Shooters and Online Antisocial Subcultures', Global Network on Extremism & Technology, 13 July 2022.

⁷⁷ J. Strebe, 'Die Erfindung des esoterischen Nationalsozialismus im Zeichen der Schwarzen Sonne' (The invention of esoteric National Socialism under the sign of the Black Sun), *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft*, 2012, pp. 224-228.

Direct threat of violence is limited, though there have been incidents instigated by right-wing extremists

In order to normalise their ideas, right-wing extremists seize on existing societal discontent. Within the present societal and political climate, people are more susceptible to right-wing extremist ideas, which makes such ideas easier to disseminate. For some, this makes right-wing extremist thinking an acceptable part of society and a solution to the problems articulated by politicians. With their racist, antisemitic and xenophobic messages, right-wing extremists leave their stamp on polarising issues, such as migration and inclusion policy. For example, right-wing extremists produce propaganda with conservative messages about subjects like gender relations, child-rearing and sex education. In doing so they are seeking to find an audience among a broader conservative segment of society. Right-wing extremists spread their ideas in a variety of ways: taking part in online discussions of social issues, disseminating slick propaganda videos, participating in representative bodies, joining in real-world protests and initiating such protests themselves. This not only serves to normalise their beliefs; it also further drives societal discontent. In the most extreme cases this can lead to violence.⁷⁸ The longer this process continues, the further the democratic legal order is likely to be undermined.

Linking up with societal discontent leads to violence, vandalism and threats

In various Western democracies, there have been violent incidents that are associated with right-wing extremism but which are not necessarily the direct result of it. In some of these incidents, individuals who did not adhere to any coherent extremist belief system committed an act of violence under the influence of right-wing extremists or radical right-wing actors. Although major acts of violence, such as the storming of the Capitol (US, 2021) or the Southport riots in the UK (2024), are less likely in the Netherlands,⁷⁹ smaller-scale incidents do occur. Examples from the past few years include the protests that spiralled out of control at town council meetings devoted to the accommodation of asylum seekers, the vandalising of mosques and the homes of refugees and minorities, and attacks on asylum seekers' centres and reception locations (including arson and gunfire).⁸⁰

⁷⁸ L.E. Berntzen, H. Kelsall and E. Hartevelde, 'Consequences of affective polarization: Avoidance, intolerance and support for violence in the United Kingdom and Norway', *European Journal of Political Research*, August 2024, pp. 927-949.

⁷⁹ 'Polarisatie in Nederland: hoe verdeeld zijn we?' (Polarisation in the Netherlands: how divided are we?), University of Amsterdam, 22 February 2022; L.E. Berntzen, H. Kelsall and E. Hartevelde, 'Consequences of affective polarization', pp. 927-949.

⁸⁰ See also 'Opnieuw escaleert een protest tegen de komst van een AZC, nu in Uden' (Once again, a protest against the arrival of an asylum seekers' centre escalates, this time in Uden), NOS, 9 April 2025; 'Rits van hevige protesten tegen azc's en die lijken nog te werken ook' (Series of heated protests against asylum seekers' centres seem to be working), *De Volkskrant*, 4 April 2025; 'Mogelijk brandstichting in toekomstige vluchtelingenopvang' (Possible arson at future refugee centre), Omroep Gelderland, 27 January 2025; 'Huizen beklad met "eigen volk eerst"' (Houses daubed with 'Our own people first'), *Leeuwarder Courant*, 16 October 2024; 'Raadsleden Montferland bekogeld met vuurwerk voor vergadering over asielpannen' (Municipal council members of Montferland pelted with fireworks before meeting on asylum plans), Omroep Gelderland, 2 December 2024; 'Explosief ontploft in Ugchelen bij te openen noodopvang asielzoekers' (Explosive goes off in Ugchelen at emergency shelter for asylum seekers before opening), Omroep Gelderland, 9 October 2024; 'Onrustig bij noodopvang Ugchelen, politie in gesprek met buurtbewoners' (Unrest in vicinity of emergency shelter in Ugchelen, police talking with local residents), Omroep Gelderland, 29 October 2024; 'Huis voor Somalisch gezin in Beilen beklad met racistische leus: 'Echt afschuwelijk'' (House intended for Somali family in Beilen daubed with racist slogan: 'Truly awful'), RTV Drenthe, 27 May 2024; 'Noodverordening ingesteld rondom azc Vianen vanwege dreigende situatie' (Emergency bye-law issued for area surrounding Vianen asylum seekers' centre due to menacing situation), RTV Utrecht, 1 March 2024; 'Moskee in Heerlen vernield en beklad met hakenkruizen, twee mannen opgepakt' (Heerlen mosque vandalised and daubed with swastikas, two men arrested), *AD*, 6 February 2024; 'Asielhotel Albergen vermoedelijk beschoten met luchtbuiks, COA doet aangifte' (Asylum hotel in Albergen allegedly shot at with air rifle, Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers lodged criminal complaint), Nu.nl, 12 January 2024; 'Aanhoudingen voor brandstichting sporthal in Deurne waar asielzoekers zouden worden opgevangen' (Arrests for arson at gymnasium in Deurne where asylum seekers were to be housed), *AD*, 13 January 2023.

The violent and intimidating nature of these incidents is worrisome, because this can ultimately lead to injuries or even fatalities. They also have the effect of putting pressure on the local democratic process.⁸¹

Most incidents largely stem from the political and societal outcry in the Netherlands over the arrival and reception of asylum seekers. There was a similar development in the Netherlands in 2015-2016 when the influx of refugees into Western Europe was at its peak. Then, too, there were threats, vandalism (including graffiti), arson and assault.⁸² In 2016 this led to a terrorist attack: a mosque was set on fire with terrorist intent. The aim of the attack was to terrorise the municipality of Enschede and the Muslim community so as to prevent an asylum seekers' centre from being opened in that city.⁸³

Right-wing extremist networks are growing, the involvement of political and state actors is a matter of concern

Right-wing extremists are working together more and more often, both in the Netherlands and internationally.⁸⁴ This can be accompanied by greater societal influence. Groups organise joint activities and attend each other's events. For example, a right-wing extremist martial arts event was held in Germany with around 130 attendees, some of whom were from the Netherlands (including minors). A leading Austrian right-wing extremist spoke at a New Year's lecture event hosted by a Dutch right-wing extremist organisation, where a member of a Dutch municipal council was also present. On 17 May the right-wing extremist identitarian movement held a conference on remigration in Milan.⁸⁵ At this event, the European identitarian movement sought to remove the taboos surrounding the theme of 'remigration' and further normalise it, in such a way that explicitly encompasses nationals of EU member states as well. The justification for remigration is found in the Great Replacement conspiracy theory. Various European politicians and former politicians, including some from the Netherlands, took part in the conference.⁸⁶ This is an indication that the right-

⁸¹ See also 'Hevig verzet tegen AZC's: wat doet dat met lokale politici?' (Fierce opposition to asylum seekers' centres: what effect does this have on local politicians?), NOS, 2 April 2025; 'Na vuurwerkincident nu nieuwe actie tegen azc in Didam: "Een beetje intimideren mag wel, vind ik"' (After incident with fireworks, a new protest against asylum seekers' centre in Didam: 'A certain amount of intimidation is okay, I think'), AD, 2 February 2025; Public Prosecution Service, 'Celstraf voor verdachte uit Albergen voor bedreiging burgemeester' (Jail time for defendant from Albergen for threatening mayor), 17 July 2024; 'Burgemeester van Houten bedreigd, 53-jarige man aangehouden' (Mayor of Houten threatened, 53-year-old man arrested), NOS, 10 April 2024; 'Opvallende oproep Velsen: inwoners, stop met bedreigen van onze politici' (Town of Velsen makes a remarkable appeal: stop threatening our politicians), NOS, 15 March 2024; Leiden University, Dreigingsmonitor Bewaken en Beveiligen 2022-2023 (Surveillance and Protection Threat Monitor), 13 June 2024, p. 11; 'Trend toenemende agressie en intimidatie tegen decentrale politici niet gekeerd' (Trend of increasing aggression and intimidation against local politicians continues), IPSOS, 16 December 2024.

⁸² NCTV, 'De golfbewegingen van rechts-extremistisch geweld in West-Europa' (The fluctuations in right-wing extremist violence in Western Europe), October 2018, p. 15.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

⁸⁴ NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, December 2024, p. 26; AIVD, 2023 Annual report, April 2024, p. 18.

⁸⁵ 'Nederlandse en Duitse nazi-knokclubs onderhouden warme banden, maar wie zijn zij? "Trainen voor mogelijke rassenstrijd"' (Dutch and German fight clubs have close ties, but who are they? 'Training for a possible race war'), *De Telegraaf*, 8 October 2024; 'Duitse politie grijpt in bij vechtsportevenement met Nederlandse tieners: "Banden met neonazi's"' (German police intervene at martial arts event with Dutch teens: 'Ties to neo-Nazis'), AD, 7 October 2024; 'FVD-politicus bezoekt lezing van omstreden Oostenrijkse rechts-extremist Martin Sellner' (Forum for Democracy politician attends lecture by controversial Austrian right-wing extremist Martin Sellner), *NRC*, 21 January 2025.

⁸⁶ 'Waarom extreemrechts een congres organiseert over "remigratie": "Ander woord voor massale deportatie"' (Why the far right is holding a conference on 'remigration' 'Another word for mass deportation'), *De Morgen*, 18 May 2025.

wing extremist concept of remigration has also been normalised to some degree within certain segments of the Dutch political arena.⁸⁷

Collaborative activities have a recruiting function. Groups within the right-wing extremist landscape focus on various target groups and can serve as a gateway to more extreme organisations. Leading international right-wing radicals and extremists further strengthen and propel the growth of right-wing extremist networks by expressing their support for protest actions, by speaking at the same events or by recording videos or podcasts together. The involvement of political actors is an additional cause for concern because it serves to lend legitimacy to right-wing extremist messages and actors.⁸⁸ Moreover, research has shown that the actions of charismatic politicians or other well-known figures, even when those actions are ambiguous, can have a major effect on followers. This serves to normalise certain words and gestures, which can have an influence on what people think and do. They take heart from the fact that a leader or influential person thinks the same way they do.⁸⁹

Recruitment with a focus on physical training, masculinity and 'white consciousness'

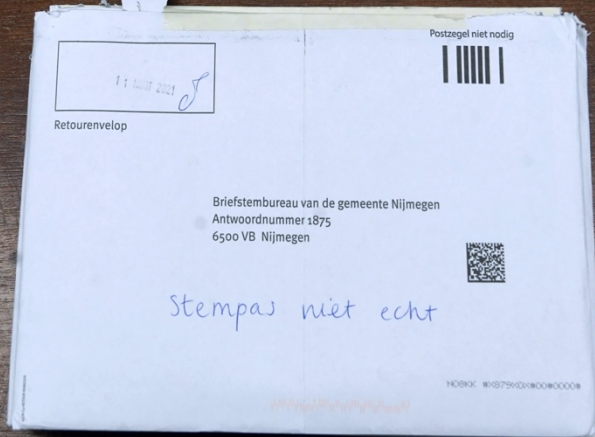
Some Dutch right-wing extremists engage in physical training to protect the 'white race', in the context of 'self-defence'. For now, this does not pose a risk of violence in the Netherlands, though it could potentially increase the risk of people being *willing* to commit violence. In the Netherlands, physical training combined with a lifestyle focused on masculinity, brotherhood and 'white consciousness' is, for the time being, mainly a recruitment tool to introduce young men to right-wing extremist ideas.

⁸⁷ 'FVD-politicus bezoekt lezing van omstreeden Oostenrijkse rechts-extremist Martin Sellner', *NRC*, 21 January 2025.

⁸⁸ See, for example, 'Wat is CPAC, het Ultrarechtse feestje van Viktor Orban en co?' (What is CPAC, Viktor Orban and co.'s ultra-right-wing fest?), *De Morgen*, 25 April 2024; 'Verdachten van leuzen op Erasmusbrug blijken spilfiguren in netwerk van neonazistische groepen' (Individuals suspected of projecting slogans on Erasmus Bridge prove to be central figures in neo-Nazi groups), *De Volkskrant*, 15 January 2025; 'Britse nationalist Tommy Robinson krijgt 18 maanden cel' (British nationalist Tommy Robinson given 18-month prison sentence), *De Morgen*, 28 October 2024; 'Premier Starmer: Musk overschrijdt grens met kritiek op VK' (Prime Minister Starmer: Musk crossed a line with his criticism of UK), *Het Financieel Dagblad*, 7 January 2025; RAND Europe, 'Van woorden naar daden: een verkenning en kritische beschouwing van het concept "stochastisch terrorisme"' (From words to deeds: an exploration and critical look at the concept of 'stochastic terrorism'), February 2024; G. Serra, 'The electoral strategies of a populist candidate:

⁸⁹ Does charisma discourage experience and encourage extremism?', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 28 November 2017, pp. 45-73. 'De Muskgroet is een magneet voor extreemrechtse groepen' (Musk's salute is a magnet for far-right groups), *Trouw*, 23 January 2025.

Stempluspas
is niet
echt



In 2021 an attempt was made to vote in the parliamentary elections with a fake voting pass. Such actions undermine the democratic legal order.

Chapter 3

Anti-institutional terrorism and extremism

The extremist segment of the anti-institutional movement believes that a malevolent elite is conspiring against the public, oppressing, exploiting or even murdering ordinary people. A small segment of the movement poses a violent (terrorist) threat.

Anti-institutional extremists pose a real violent threat

A very small segment of the anti-institutional extremists in the Netherlands is actually willing and able to use violence. This group poses a limited, though real threat of violence. It is not only sovereign citizens who pose this threat, but also supporters of other sub-narratives that fall under the heading of ‘anti-institutional extremism’, such as that of satanic ritual child abuse.

For anti-institutional extremists, the perception of being at war with a malevolent elite legitimises the use of violence. This practice of demonising opponents, in combination with feelings of resentment, personal crises or psychological problems can serve to spur on violence. Recent academic studies have also made clear the power that conspiracy theories have to inspire violence.⁹⁰ These studies reveal that the more people believe in malicious conspiracies, the more likely they are to excuse, facilitate or use violence. The state of permanent crisis that radicalised conspiracy theorists perceive and their ongoing fantasies about a violent confrontation with the ‘elite’ can pave the way for violence. This threat of violence is more likely to manifest itself in small-scale incidents targeting institutions, their representatives and certain specific locations. This threat is less likely to materialise as large-scale terrorist attacks on random members of the public, aimed at terrorising society.

These anti-institutional extremists who are prepared to use violence come from various social classes, and generally live in the rural part of the country. The majority of this group became radicalised during the COVID-19 pandemic. At times this radicalisation process was a purely individual

⁹⁰ B. Rottweiler and P. Gill, ‘Conspiracy Beliefs and Violent Extremist Intentions: the Contingent Effects of Self-efficacy, Self-control and Law-related Morality’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2022, pp. 1485-1504; J. Bartlett and C. Miller, ‘The Power of Unreason: Conspiracy Theories, Extremism, and Counter-Terrorism’, 2010; F. Vegetti and L. Littvay, ‘Belief in Conspiracy and Attitudes toward Political Violence’, *Italian Political Science Review*, March 2022, pp. 18-32; C. Zoschak and K. Keneally, ‘Conspiracy Theories Continue to Mobilize Extremists to Violence’, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 26 June 2024.

affair, though in other cases it took place within small, informal groups of like-minded parties. These groups have a limited capacity for organisation, which constrains their potential for organised violence. But their fantasies of violence and certain triggers, such as the loss of a job or home, or the end of a relationship can, in certain conditions, spur a person on to violence. Violent incidents abroad also illustrate this capacity for violence. Anti-institutional extremists in the Netherlands who are prepared to use violence are often more knowledgeable about and proficient in the use of instruments of violence than other extremists. Many of them have a fascination with guns and practise using them. The legal weapons they use (especially air guns) can be fatal at medium and close range. In addition, a number of them attempt to purchase illegal firearms.

Self-proclaimed sovereign citizens form an important subgroup within the extremist segment of the anti-institutional movement. In the Netherlands there are several tens of thousands of supporters of sovereigntist ideas. They see the government as an illegitimate power whose actions are at odds with both 'natural law' and 'customary law'.⁹¹ Most sovereign citizens try to live as autonomously as possible and remain within the bounds of the law. Between a few dozen and a hundred of them believe that a violent confrontation with the government is inevitable. Following the example of their American counterparts, they are establishing their own courts and appointing their own 'sheriffs', talking about setting up civil militias and threatening to carry out citizen's arrests. A part of this small group is actively preparing for the violent confrontation with the government that they foresee. This is not only being done in a defensive manner; some are choosing an offensive approach.⁹² For example, they are not only purchasing weapons to defend themselves; some are even talking about arming themselves to engage in targeted violence against individuals. In some cases this can lead to a serious violent threat, targeting government representatives and administrators (see inset).

⁹¹ Natural law is the belief in universal, unchanging laws, such as the prohibition on killing, stealing or compelling people to do things without their consent. Sovereign citizens consider 'natural law' to be the highest law. In their interpretation, 'natural law' is supported by common law. According to sovereign citizens, common law justifies resistance against those who violate natural law. Sovereign citizens interpret these 'rights' as these see fit, and conclude that it is mainly the government that is violating natural law; see AIVD, National Police and NCTV, 'Met de rug naar de samenleving: Een analyse van de soevereinenbeweging in Nederland' (Turning their back on society: an analysis of the sovereign citizen movement in the Netherlands), 9 April 2024, pp. 9-10.

⁹² *Ibid.* pp. 16-17.

Arrests of individuals for being members of terrorist organisations and for preparing a terrorist offence

In 2024 a total of 10 people were arrested in connection with an investigation into a group of sovereign citizens that had become radicalised. Eight of them were charged with participation in a terrorist organisation. They are probably part of the organisation Common Law Nederland Earth (CLNE) and/or of local militias associated with it.⁹³ One arrestee is suspected of involvement in training people to commit terrorist offences.⁹⁴ Three of them are also suspected of preparing a terrorist offence.⁹⁵ These radical sovereignists were in contact with each other about carrying out ‘citizen’s arrests’ of political office holders.⁹⁶ It is thought that their targets included mayors, at least one police officer, other officials and/or bailiffs. Firearms and ammunition were found during several arrests. All suspects have been released pending the hearings on the merits of the criminal cases brought against them.⁹⁷ Despite these arrests there is still a threat of terrorist violence in the Netherlands posed by sovereign citizens who are prepared to commit violence and by other anti-institutional extremists.

In addition to the threat of terrorist violence, anti-institutional ideology leads some to commit ad hoc violence. This mainly occurs when anti-institutional extremists come into contact with representatives of the government. There is, for example, a broader group of a few thousand sovereign citizens who refuse to pay taxes to the government and in some cases bills from private companies. They de-register themselves and their families from the municipality where they reside, and in some cases take their children out of school. All this can lead to financial or other problems.⁹⁸ When government authorities approach this group of sovereign citizens, this can elicit threats, intimidation, doxing and violence against bailiffs, police officers, youth care workers or other public officials.⁹⁹ This makes it more difficult for important institutions to perform their duties. If sovereign citizens are no longer officially registered with a municipality, this limits the range of actions municipalities and other bodies can take with respect to this group and their ability to monitor it.

Some anti-institutional extremists incorporate various forms of spirituality into their belief system. This ideological syncretism means, on the one hand, that official bodies have more trouble recognising anti-institutional beliefs and that it is consequently more difficult for them to offer appropriate help. This isolates this group of people even further, which can lead to radicalisation. On the one hand, this mix of beliefs means that a large group of spiritually inclined people are more likely to come into contact with anti-institutional ideas, whether online or in public gatherings.

⁹³ Public Prosecution Service, ‘Opnieuw aanhoudingen radicale soevereinen’ (Additional arrests of sovereign citizen radicals), 27 September 2024.

⁹⁴ Public Prosecution Service, ‘Tiende verdachte radicale soevereinen aangehouden’ (Tenth sovereign citizen radical arrested), 10 December 2024.

⁹⁵ NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, December 2024, p. 31.

⁹⁶ Public Prosecution Service, ‘Opnieuw aanhoudingen radicale soevereinen’ (Additional arrests of sovereign citizen radicals), 27 September 2024.

⁹⁷ ‘Drie “soevereine” verdachten mogen terreurproces in vrijheid afwachten’ (Three ‘sovereign’ suspects allowed to await terrorism trial in freedom), *Trouw*, 7 March 2025. Shortly before this DTN was published, eight sovereign citizens were arrested. These arrests tie in with the current assessment of anti-institutional extremism. Like most of the supporters of this movement, the suspects are relatively old (aged between 39 and 74) and mostly live in rural parts of the Netherlands. As was the case with last year’s arrests, the police found weapons and ammunition (and possibly also explosives) when searching the suspects’ homes. This network’s geographic spread is striking. ‘Opnieuw lijkt de politie netwerk van soevereinen op het spoor: acht personen aangehouden’ (Police appear to have tracked down yet another network of sovereign citizens: eight individuals arrested), *De Volkskrant*, 11 June 2025.

⁹⁸ AIVD, National Police and NCTV, ‘Met de rug naar de samenleving’, pp. 14-15.

⁹⁹ The number of incidents attributable to sovereign citizens over the past six months is the same as the number for the previous six months.

Anti-institutional thinking within government organisations

In the Netherlands, a small number of anti-institutional extremists, including self-proclaimed sovereign citizens, work for government organisations or in critical sectors. Their beliefs can be at odds with their jobs.¹⁰⁰

Anti-institutional extremists contribute to intimidation and threats

In general the social climate in the Netherlands has become harsher, with social norms becoming less clear-cut than they once were.¹⁰¹ Sometimes extremists commit crimes or play an instigating role, but often incidents cannot be traced back to a particular extremist ideology, at least not directly. However, the spread of conspiracy theories, misinformation and disinformation by anti-institutional extremists does contribute to a rise in threatening behaviour, intimidation and violence targeting individuals including politicians, scientists and journalists.¹⁰² Examples of this in recent years in the Netherlands are the threats against then Prime Minister Mark Rutte and various ministers, MPs, mayors, scientists and journalists.¹⁰³

Over the past decade the Netherlands has seen an increase in the frequency with which politicians are subjected to threats (both online and in the real world) and acts of intimidation.¹⁰⁴ A quarter of members of the House of Representatives are receiving some form of protection. Compared to 2014 the number of cases related to local or provincial politicians has doubled, and since the peak year of 2022 it has remained virtually the same. A large proportion of the threats can be traced to anti-institutional extremists.¹⁰⁵ In 2024 nearly half of political office holders at local or provincial level faced some form of aggression. Around 60% of these incidents occurred online. Women are

¹⁰⁰ 'Politie en defensie worstelen met "soevereine" collega's die overheid niet erkennen' (Police and defence organisation struggle with 'sovereign' colleagues who don't recognise the government), RTL Nieuws, 5 February 2025.

¹⁰¹ Leiden University, *Dreigingsmonitor Bewaken en Beveiligen 2022-2023*, 13 June 2024, p. 49; University of Groningen, 'Fenomeenanalyse extremisme, radicalisering en maatschappelijke onrust in IJsseland' (Analysis of the phenomenon of extremism, radicalisation and societal unrest in IJsseland), February 2025, p. 27; 'Trend toenemende agressie en intimidatie tegen decentrale politici niet gekeerd', IPSOS, 16 December 2024.

¹⁰² T. Bjørge et al., 'Patterns and Consequences of Threats towards Politicians: Results from Surveys of National and Local Politicians in Norway', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, December 2022, pp. 100-119; T. Bjørge and K. Braddock, 'Anti-government extremism: A new threat?' *Perspectives on Terrorism*, December 2022, pp. 2-8; AIVD, 'Anti-institutioneel-extremisme in Nederland: Een ernstige dreiging voor de democratische rechtsorde?' (Anti-institutional extremism in the Netherlands: a serious threat to the democratic legal order?), 25 May 2023.

¹⁰³ See, for example, 'Met een mes op z'n eigen keel stapt Wenlyn (45) het politiebureau binnen na bedreigen Jesse Klaver' (With a knife to his own throat Wenlyn (45) walked into the police station after threatening [Green Party politician] Jesse Klaver), *AD*, 31 January 2025; 'Burgemeester Gorinchem op de markt bedreigd met de dood' (Gorinchem mayor receives death threat at market), NOS, 8 November 2023; 'Vijf maanden cel voor man die met fakkel bij huis Kaag stond' (Five-month jail sentence for man who stood outside the home of Minister Kaag with flaming torch), RTL Nieuws, 13 February 2023; 'Gevangenisstraf voor bedreiger Rutte, ministers en Jaap van Dissel' (Prison sentence for person who threatened Rutte, ministers and head of the Dutch public health organisation Jaap van Dissel), NOS, 21 May 2021; 'Geweld en middelvingers nopen NOS logo te verwijderen van straatwagens' (Violence and middle fingers prompt NOS to remove logo from satellite vans), *De Volkskrant*, 15 October 2020.

¹⁰⁴ Leiden University, *Dreigingsmonitor Bewaken en Beveiligen 2022-2023*, 13 June 2024, p. 11; IPSOS, 'Trend toenemende agressie en intimidatie tegen decentrale politici niet gekeerd', 16 December 2024.

¹⁰⁵ AIVD, 2024 Annual report, 24 April 2025, p. 14 and p. 45.

one-and-a-half times as likely as men to encounter aggression, both online and in the physical world.¹⁰⁶ The ongoing high level of aggression against office holders undermines the functioning of public administration and thus the democratic legal order.¹⁰⁷ Local politicians no longer always feel free to speak their minds, and people are having second thoughts about standing for election.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Leiden University, Dreigingsmonitor Bewaken en Beveiligen 2022-2023, 13 June 2024, p. 44.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, 'Ook jonge politici worden bedreigd, VVD-talent wil politiek niet meer in' (Young politicians also receiving threats, Liberal Party talents no longer want to go into politics), NOS, 27 May 2023; 'Opvallende oproep Velsen: inwoners, stop met bedreigen van onze politici', NOS, 15 March 2024; "'Politici die stoppen vanwege bedreigingen, doen dat vooral voor familie'" ('For politicians who decide to stop due to threats, the main reason is their family'), NOS, 26 May 2023.



Left-wing extremists generally do not engage in violence in their protests. When they do, it is usually in the context of resisting arrest.

Chapter 4

Left-wing extremism

Organised left-wing extremism in the Netherlands is fragmented and ideologically varied, with few adherents. For a number of years the left-wing extremist scene has been growing, due in part to the involvement of foreign extremists living in the Netherlands. At present, the threat of violence posed by left-wing extremists is limited.

Violence is sporadic, though disruptive protests and acts of intimidation do occur

The left-wing extremist scene in the Netherlands consists mainly of anarchists, communists and anti-fascists. Key issues within the scene include anti-racism, migration and housing. Over the past six months there has been a growth in anti-militarism, and the war in Gaza has become a key issue. Left-wing extremists in the Netherlands usually protest in a non-violent fashion. That said, some activities do have an intimidating character.¹⁰⁹ This may take the form of threats, acts of vandalism or throwing foreign substances at people. When left-wing extremist individuals or groups in the Netherlands do use violence, it is mainly directed at the police, security personnel and right-wing extremists. The violence in these cases does not target human lives; rather it tends to occur when an individual is resisting arrest or in the form of minor assault.

Although various sub-groups exist within left-wing extremism, each with their own key issues, they regularly team up, collaborating in ever-shifting configurations. In addition to organising their own protest actions and demonstrations, left-wing extremists take part in more widely supported, lawful forms of protest, such as demonstrations by the climate movement or pro-Palestine protests.¹¹⁰ The internationalisation of the left-wing extremist scene in the Netherlands, which has been occurring for a number of years now, has not yet led to any observable growth in verbally or physically violent forms of left-wing extremist activity in the Netherlands.

¹⁰⁹ NCTV, *Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands*, December 2024, p. 35.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Growing anti-militarism and increasing willingness to take action

There is growing anti-militarism, rising anti-NATO sentiment and an increasing willingness to engage in protest actions on these issues within the wider radical leftist and left-wing extremist scene in the Netherlands. This mainly takes the form of vandalism and sabotage. The focus is on blockading and sabotaging companies in the defence industry, which are held responsible for war, colonialism and genocide. An example is the sabotage of two cranes at the Damen shipyard in December 2024. Despite the occasional incident, extremist activities are thus far still rare. At the NATO Summit on 25 and 26 June 2025 in the Netherlands there is a risk that left-wing extremists intend to stage protests.



WIE IS BETAALD
DOOR
MOSKOU ?

This protester's banner, which reads 'Who was paid by Moscow?', is a reference to possible Russian interference in Dutch politics. In recent years the state threat posed by Russia to European countries has increased.

Special theme section

Increasing Russian state threat contributes to extremist and terrorist threat in the Netherlands to a limited extent

One of the NCTV's tasks is to flag developments in the wider world that could have implications for Dutch national security. The aim of the DTN is to make our partners and the general public aware of the current terrorist threat, regardless of the security focus areas from which that threat arises.

In addition to extremism and terrorism there is now also a focus within the security domain on state threats. These involve subversive activities by state actors – such as disinformation campaigns – espionage and cyberattacks, that pose a national security threat.¹¹¹ Although there are times when extremism/terrorism and state threats intersect (as in the case of state-sponsored terrorism for example),¹¹² in general these are fairly distinct focus areas. Nevertheless, there are certainly similarities between them. The Russian state threat, which in recent years has increased, manifests itself partly in interactions between Russia and Western anti-institutional and right-wing extremists. This element of the Russian threat in particular could have implications for the extremist and terrorist threat in various Western countries, including the Netherlands.

¹¹¹ For more information on state threats, visit the NCTV's website.

¹¹² Terrorism directed or facilitated by states.

Influence of increasing Russian state threat on extremist and terrorist threat in the Netherlands

The Russian state threat has been increasing for several years now. Examples include the military threat, espionage (both physical and digital) and subversive influencing. Russia is conducting covert influencing operations, in both the physical and digital domains, aimed at steering the public debate and the political/governmental decision-making process. For example, since the start of the war in Ukraine, Russia has covertly organised various ‘peace demonstrations’ in the Netherlands. In both the Netherlands and other Western countries, Russian disinformation resonates with anti-institutional, radical right-wing and right-wing extremist movements. Russian narratives fit neatly within the ideology and agenda of these movements.

Interactions between Russian actors and extremists are not a new phenomenon. As part of their efforts to undermine Western democracies, Russian actors have also interacted in the past with extremist and terrorist groups.¹¹³ Their aim is to drive a wedge between Western countries and amplify existing divisions in Western societies. Over the past 10 to 15 years the level of interaction has increased. The approach taken by Russian actors in this regard is generally opportunistic. It is by no means always a structured and coordinated effort by the country’s central government. Russian actors often operate autonomously, on the basis of their own interests and convictions, but they frequently do so in a way that takes careful account of the Russian government or that they believe is in line with the interests of Russian central government.

In the countries surrounding the Netherlands, Russian actors are trying to promote belief in anti-Western conspiracy theories by using influencing campaigns to increase the spread of extremist disinformation. The narratives of anti-institutional movements in various Western countries are largely pro-Russian. For example, such movements advance alternative explanations for the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

Right-wing extremists and individuals who espouse radical right-wing ideology may consider Russia an ally.

In various Western countries such individuals are being approached and supported by Russian actors, as are radical right-wing politicians in Western countries. Furthermore, Russia provides a safe haven to Western right-wing extremist and right-wing terrorist groups and their leaders. In addition, Russian right-wing extremists are providing paramilitary training to Western right-wing extremists.

Interactions between Russian actors and anti-institutional and right-wing extremists are less common in the Netherlands than in a number of other Western countries. Intelligence investigations have shown that the Netherlands is generally unlikely to be considered a major target when it

¹¹³ R.T. Kronenbitter, ‘Paris Okhrana 1885-1905’, in: *Okhrana: The Paris Operations of the Russian Imperial Police* (CIA 1997), pp. 19-30; W. Klem, *De anti terroristen. De Europese strijd tegen het anarchisme 1890-1914* (The anti-terrorists: the European fight against anarchism 1890-1914) (Amsterdam 2022), p. 63; A. Applebaum, *Autocracy Inc.: The Dictators Who Want to Run the World* (New York 2024), p. 22.

comes to subversive influencing operations. For the time being, therefore, the phenomenon's direct impact on Dutch national security is fairly limited compared with those other countries. Russian interaction with supporters of extremist movements abroad does have an impact in the Netherlands, however, given the transnational nature of those movements. After all, it helps to normalise, legitimise and increase the spread of extremist ideologies. As a result, in the Netherlands it serves to undermine social and political stability and the democratic legal order.

Motivations for interaction

The fact that interaction is taking place between Russia and Western extremists does not necessarily mean that the Russian government or some other Russian actor is the initiator of such contact. Interaction is a reciprocal process involving multiple parties, and frequently it is the extremists that are seeking contact.¹¹⁴ It is often hard to say precisely to what degree one party or another takes the initiative or how equal the interaction between those parties is.

From the Russian government's point of view, interactions with anti-institutional and right-wing extremists are part of a deliberate, much broader strategy of undermining Western democracies. This is a strategy to which it takes a pragmatic and opportunistic approach. It is by no means always the case that Russia requires the individuals and groups with which it interacts to be on its own political and ideological wavelength. The main consideration is that the interaction should have the desired subversive effect. Any ideology, group or incident that lends itself to influencing and sowing division may be seized upon with a view to undermining Western democracy. As a result, Russia is targeting many more groups in Western societies than anti-institutional and right-wing extremist movements alone.

There are various reasons why the Russian government and other Russian actors consider it expedient to interact with radical and extremist movements in other countries.¹¹⁵ If a state actor succeeds, for example by providing support, in manoeuvring a radical political party into a position of power, this may increase that state actor's political influence. It may then have the opportunity to move political decision-making in a direction more favourable to it, such as the easing or lifting of sanctions, for example. Supporters of radical and extremist movements can also be used to spread certain narratives in order to sway public opinion in favour of the state actor, or to cast doubt on the legitimacy of a country's democratic and social institutions. The Russian government is intent on weakening democratic states, and one of its tactics in this regard is to increase and strengthen radical and extremist elements in those democracies.¹¹⁶ In this way it is increasing polarisation, for

¹¹⁴ K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), p. 6.

¹¹⁵ European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2023 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2022/2075(INI)); K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), pp. 4-6; Standing Intelligence Agencies Review Committee, 'Informatiepositie van de inlichtingendiensten wat betreft de financiering door stichtingen of andere organisaties en inzake de invloed die Rusland uitoefent op "politici" in België (No. 2022.297)' (Information available to the intelligence services regarding financing by foundations or other organisations and regarding influence exerted by Russia on 'politicians' in Belgium), 23 December 2022.

¹¹⁶ Standing Intelligence Agencies Review Committee, 'Informatiepositie van de inlichtingendiensten wat betreft de financiering door stichtingen of andere organisaties en inzake de invloed die Rusland uitoefent op "politici" in België (No. 2022.297)' (Information available to the intelligence services regarding financing by foundations or other organisations and regarding influence exerted by Russia on 'politicians' in Belgium), 23 December 2022; "De brutaliteit van extreemrechts is moordend voor de democratie": Hendrik

example, and this may serve to boost the threat posed by these elements and undermine social and political stability.

Conversely, from the perspective of radical and extremist movements it can be useful to seek closer ties with Russia.¹¹⁷ If they see overlap with their ideologies, interests and political or societal standpoints, for example, they may consider Russia an ally whose goals are at least partly similar to their own. The support that may arise from interacting with the Russian government or other Russian actors could for example help those movements spread, normalise and legitimise their own extremist ideologies. What is more, Russian actors can also be a source of finance, knowledge and contacts.

Manifestations of interaction in Western countries

Interaction between anti-institutional extremists and Russian actors

Various anti-institutional extremists in Europe have sought contact with representatives of Russia. For example, the members of the ‘Reichsbürger’ movement, a group that plotted a coup d’état in Germany, tried to establish ties with Russian diplomats in Germany, the Russian foreign minister and Vladimir Putin himself.¹¹⁸ Discussions did in fact take place with Russian diplomats, but their outcome is not known. The extent to which these discussions contributed to the coup preparations thus remains unclear. Nevertheless, in several of the subsequent indictments the German authorities described Russia as ‘the only central reference point’ for the coup plotters.¹¹⁹ This example also shows that Russian government representatives seem to be willing to enter into discussions with members of an extremist movement in Germany that has been involved in hundreds of violent (and sometimes fatal) incidents.¹²⁰

The individuals behind a similar plot in France also sought support from the Russian state. The leader of the French conspirators made out that his group was already receiving such support, so as to inspire his supporters and make recruitment easier.¹²¹

Vos over Oekraïne, Gaza en uiterst rechts’ (‘The sheer gall of the extreme right is killing democracy’: Hendrik Vos on Ukraine, Gaza and the far right), *De Morgen*, 6 April 2024; K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), pp. 5-6; ‘Russisch netwerk op X poogde radicaal-rechts in Europa te versterken’ (Russian network on X tried to strengthen radical right in Europe), *de Volkskrant*, 12 July 2024; ‘Gerecht Münster: inlichtingendienst mag AfD in de gaten houden’ (Münster Court: intelligence service may keep AfD under surveillance), *FD*, 13 May 2024; European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2023 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2022/2075(INI)).

¹¹⁷ Standing Intelligence Agencies Review Committee, ‘Informatiepositie van de inlichtingendiensten wat betreft de financiering door stichtingen of andere organisaties en inzake de invloed die Rusland uitoefent op “politici” in België (No. 2022.297)’ (Information available to the intelligence services regarding financing by foundations or other organisations and regarding influence exerted by Russia on ‘politicians’ in Belgium), 23 December 2022; K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), pp. 4-6.

¹¹⁸ K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), pp. 48-49.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

¹²⁰ ‘“Reichsbürger”-beweging explosief gegroeid’ (‘Reichsbürger’ movement has seen explosive growth), Duitsland Instituut, 7 December 2022; ‘Wie zijn de Reichsbürger, die worden verdacht van een coup poging in Duitsland?’ (Who are the Reichsbürger, accused of an attempted coup in Germany?), *Trouw*, 14 December 2022.

¹²¹ B. Molas et al., ‘Anti-Government Threats and their Transnational Connections’, ICCT, March 2024, pp. 32-33; ‘De “Tegenbeweging” anno 2023: alleen het Kremlin is nog fan’ (The ‘Opposition Movement’ [against the COVID restrictions] in 2023: only the Kremlin is

During the Russian war against Ukraine, an outspoken Dutch pro-Russian ‘citizen journalist’, who spreads anti-institutional conspiracy theories and has both anti-institutional and radical right-wing supporters, travelled to the front where she embedded with Russian troops in order to report on the conflict.¹²² Her reporting consistently parroted the Kremlin’s narrative. No Western media outlets bought pieces from this ‘journalist’, with the exception of one Dutch pro-Russian magazine, which itself also spreads a large number of anti-institutional conspiracy theories.¹²³ In this way, pro-Russian reporting from Ukraine was served up to the tens of thousands of Dutch readers of the publication in question.

Conversely, Russia is seeking contact in various countries with anti-institutional individuals and groups, including sovereign citizens.¹²⁴ For the past few years, for example, a sovereign citizen movement in Texas has received support from Russia.¹²⁵ Russian troll factories shared an interview with the ‘foreign minister’ of this sovereign movement and Russian representatives tried to arrange a meeting with members of the movement.¹²⁶

Through its interactions with anti-institutional extremists, the Russian government is trying to promote belief in anti-Western conspiracy theories. In doing so Russia is exploiting the largely pro-Russian stance among those who support anti-institutional movements. That stance likely makes them more susceptible to Russian covert influencing campaigns.¹²⁷ In this way, anti-institutional movements have become a means by which Russia can attempt to undermine Western democracies.¹²⁸ This ‘largely pro-Russian stance’ does not mean that *all* anti-institutionalists view Russia positively. Nor does a pro-Russian stance necessarily help spread anti-institutional narratives, since Dutch people are generally on the side of Ukraine or adopt a neutral position in regard to Russia’s war against Ukraine.¹²⁹

still a fan), *Knack*, 1 March 2023; ‘Poetins marionetten in Nederland: “burgerjournalist” fanatiek verspreider van totale onzin; In de frontlinie van Russische propaganda’ (Putin’s puppets in the Netherlands: ‘citizen journalist’ fanatical spreader of total nonsense; On the frontline of Russian propaganda), *De Telegraaf*, 29 July 2023; “A deranged fringe movement”: what is Maga communism, the online ideology platformed by Tucker Carlson?, *The Guardian*, 24 May 2024.

¹²² ‘Poetins marionetten in Nederland: “burgerjournalist” fanatiek verspreider van totale onzin; In de frontlinie van Russische propaganda’ (Putin’s puppets in the Netherlands: ‘citizen journalist’ fanatical spreader of total nonsense; On the frontline of Russian propaganda), *De Telegraaf*, 29 July 2023.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ B. Molas et al., ‘Anti-Government Threats and their Transnational Connections’, ICCT March 2024, pp. 31-32; ‘Poetin komt met bekende boodschap over russofobie: “Alsof hij voor complotdenkers spreekt”’ (Putin spouts usual message about Russophobia: ‘As if he speaks for conspiracy theorists’), RTL Nieuws, 9 May 2023; ‘Rijksburgers in beklagenbank; “Ze wilden de democratie om zeep helpen”’ (Reichsbürgers in the dock: ‘They wanted to help destroy democracy’), *De Telegraaf*, 30 April 2024.

¹²⁵ B. Molas et al., ‘Anti-Government Threats and their Transnational Connections’, ICCT March 2024, pp. 31-32.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ AIVD, ‘Anti-institutional extremism in the Netherlands – A serious threat to the democratic legal order?’, May 2023, p. 20; AIVD and MIVD, ‘24/2 The Russian attack on Ukraine: a turning point in history’, 20 February 2023, pp. 13-14; ‘Ook in Vlaanderen groeit het protest tijdens de Week van de Lentekriebels - Seksuele voorlichting op school maakt steeds meer ouders boos’ (In Flanders too, protest grows during *Week van de Lentekriebels*, with more and more parents venting anger at sex education week in schools), *De Morgen*, 15 March 2024.

¹²⁸ B. Molas et al., ‘Anti-Government Threats and their Transnational Connections’, ICCT March 2024, p. 35.

¹²⁹ AIVD, ‘Anti-institutional extremism in the Netherlands – A serious threat to the democratic legal order?’, May 2023, p. 20.

Russian interaction with right-wing extremists/radicals

Right-wing extremists, right-wing terrorists and people who espouse radical right-wing ideology may also consider Russia an ally and may seek closer ties with the country. They regularly propagate pro-Russian positions and narratives.¹³⁰ The prominent Norwegian right-wing terrorist Anders Breivik recently described Putin as ‘the foremost defender of Europeans globally’. In December 2024 Breivik appeared at a court hearing with the letter ‘Z’ shaved into his hair.¹³¹ The letter ‘Z’ is a symbol of support for Putin’s war in Ukraine and of Russian victory. At the hearing Breivik also carried a poster expressing his support for Russia and its allies.

The right-wing terrorist organisation ‘The Base’ (whose leader has lived in Russia for years) is using social media to call for targeted killings and attacks on critical infrastructure in Ukraine. Volunteers are offered money to carry out such operations.¹³²

Russia is recruiting ‘low-level agents’ to carry out sabotage operations in European countries as part of its hybrid warfare efforts.¹³³ These ‘low-level agents’ generally have little to no experience. They are mainly motivated by money and sometimes (either exclusively or additionally) by ideological affiliation with Russia.¹³⁴ Although Russia’s recruitment efforts are opportunistic in nature and do not specifically target right-wing extremists, these ‘low-level agents’ do sometimes include such individuals.¹³⁵ They are recruited, for example, via appeals posted in right-wing extremist chat groups.¹³⁶

Conversely, Russia views Western individuals from radical right-wing and right-wing extremist circles as allies too. Russian actors, including the Russian government, have in some cases been approaching and supporting such individuals for years. Examples of such support include the direct transfer of resources and know-how, the sharing of contacts and the dissemination of

¹³⁰ ‘AIVD waarschuwde Baudet voor Russische beïnvloeding’ (AIVD warned Baudet about Russian influencing), *de Volkskrant*, 23 February 2023; A. Applebaum, *Autocracy, Inc.: The Dictators Who Want to Run the World* (New York 2024), p. 86; ‘Poetins marionetten in Nederland: “burgerjournalist” fanatiek verspreider van totale onzin; In de frontlinie van Russische propaganda’ (Putin’s puppets in the Netherlands: ‘citizen journalist’ fanatical spreader of total nonsense; On the frontline of Russian propaganda), *De Telegraaf*, 29 July 2023; ‘De corona-erfenis voor Italië: extreem-rechtse infiltratie en samenzweringstheorieën’ (Italy’s COVID legacy: far-right infiltration and conspiracy theories), *NRC*, 26 February 2024.

¹³¹ ‘Norwegian terrorist attends parole hearing with Russian-style “Z” cut into hair’, *The Telegraph*, 19 November 2024.

¹³² ‘US neo-Nazi group with Russia-based leader calls for targeted Ukraine attacks’, *The Guardian*, 5 April 2025.

¹³³ ‘Poetins oorlog tegen het Westen: Rusland zet “wegwerpsspionnen” in op Europese bodem’ (Putin’s war on the West: Russia deploying ‘disposable spies’ on European soil), *Knack*, 6 November 2024.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), pp. 181-187; ‘Russian agents recruit far-Right to plot terror attacks on Britain’, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 12 May 2024; ‘Neo-Nazi group the Base found a safe space to recruit Americans: the Russian internet’, *The Guardian*, 28 October 2024.

¹³⁶ Based on feedback regarding this special theme section obtained from the AIVD on 6 March 2025.

disinformation.¹³⁷ Disinformation is spread, for instance, via Russian media channels controlled by the government.¹³⁸

In the Netherlands it emerged last year that a Russian hosting provider had subleased server space in Dronten to the right-wing hate forum 8kun and a foreign neo-Nazi website.¹³⁹

Russia also offers a safe haven to Western right-wing extremist and right-wing terrorist groups and their leaders.¹⁴⁰ From Russia they can continue their activities without hindrance, for instance making use of Russian social media platforms which have virtually no content moderation in place.¹⁴¹ The Russian government also allows Russian right-wing extremists to provide their Western counterparts with paramilitary training.¹⁴² In 2016, after returning from a training camp near St Petersburg, Swedish right-wing extremists carried out three terrorist attacks on asylum seekers and left-wing activists, using homemade bombs. Thanks to poorly set timers, there were no fatalities, though one man was left with life-changing injuries.¹⁴³ The Russian right-wing extremist group that facilitated the training has links to the Russian army.¹⁴⁴ The group's ties to the Russian government are ambiguous, but there is certainly some degree of symbiosis or cooperation. The government tolerates the group for strategic reasons because its activities serve the Kremlin's interests.¹⁴⁵

The Swedish case is not the only example of interaction between right-wing extremists and Russia forming the basis for terrorist activities. In 2018 members of a Polish neo-Fascist group were approached via a right-wing extremist intermediary in Germany about committing a terrorist attack on a Hungarian cultural centre in Ukraine. The aim was to ensure that Ukrainian neo-Nazis were blamed for the attack, so as to damage relations between Hungary and Ukraine.¹⁴⁶ If the plot had succeeded, the attack could also have bolstered the credibility of the 'justification' for invading Ukraine advanced by Russia. The propaganda line was that Ukraine needed to be liberated from the neo-Nazis that Russia claimed had taken over the country.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁷ B. Molas et al., 'Anti-Government Threats and their Transnational Connections', ICCT March 2024, p. 31; 'Zo kan de radicaal-rechtse revolte (misschien) gestopt worden', (Here's how the radical-right revolt can (possibly) be stopped) *NRC*, 26 September 2024; K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), pp. 333 and 340; 'Herken de tsaar in Poetin' (Recognise the Tsar in Putin), *NRC*, 14 January 2017; 'Campagne via Nederlandse servers', (Campaign waged via Dutch servers) *NRC*, 11 July 2024; "'De brutaliteit van extreemrechts is moordend voor de democratie': Hendrik Vos over Oekraïne, Gaza en uiterst rechts' (The sheer gall of the extreme right is killing democracy': Hendrik Vos on Ukraine, Gaza and the far right), *De Morgen*, 6 April 2024; 'US neo-Nazi group with Russia-based leader calls for targeted Ukraine attacks', *The Guardian*, 5 April 2025.

¹³⁸ K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), pp. 272-273.

¹³⁹ 'Campagne via Nederlandse servers' (Campaign waged via Dutch servers), *NRC*, 11 July 2024.

¹⁴⁰ 'Neo-Nazi group the Base found a safe space to recruit Americans: the Russian internet', *The Guardian*, 28 October 2024; K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), p. 342; 'US neo-Nazi group with Russia-based leader calls for targeted Ukraine attacks', *The Guardian*, 5 April 2025.

¹⁴¹ 'Neo-Nazi group the Base found a safe space to recruit Americans: the Russian internet', *The Guardian*, 28 October 2024; 'US neo-Nazi group with Russia-based leader calls for targeted Ukraine attacks', *The Guardian*, 5 April 2025.

¹⁴² K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), pp. 272, 272-278, 334.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁴⁷ 'Putin: "Demilitarisation", "denazification" remain war aims', BBC, 14 December 2023.

Russia also deliberately uses disinformation as a weapon.¹⁴⁸ The real-world damage that disinformation can cause was illustrated in the summer of 2024 following the murder of three children in Southport (United Kingdom). After a Russian disinformation campaign, in which false rumours were spread alleging that the killer was a Muslim refugee, and after several radical right-wing and right-wing extremist agitators seized on those rumours and began spreading inflammatory messages, riots broke out in which many people from radical right-wing and right-wing extremist circles participated.¹⁴⁹

Radical right-wing politicians are also being approached and supported by actors in Russia.¹⁵⁰ One general modus operandi of the Russian state is to develop ties with such politicians via a web of personal and professional relationships, creating a certain level of dependency in the process.¹⁵¹ In April 2024 it emerged that various radical right-wing members of the European Parliament had been bribed to spread pro-Russian propaganda (this was known as the ‘Voice of Europe scandal’).¹⁵² Several months later it became clear that a Russian online network had been actively promoting radical right-wing political parties ahead of the European Parliament election in June.¹⁵³

It should be noted that there are also radical right-wing and right-wing extremist individuals and groups that are not pro-Russian. Some, for instance, doubt the sincerity of the country’s conservative ideological orientation, which appeals to many right-wing radicals and extremists.¹⁵⁴ In addition, the Russian war against Ukraine has sown plenty of division, since it is a war between two ‘white nations’.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ A. Applebaum, *Autocracy Inc.: The Dictators Who Want to Run the World* (New York 2024), p. 84.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Verdachte drievoudige moord in Southport voorgelegd, zwijgt over motief’ (Triple-murder suspect brought before court, silent on motive), *de Volkskrant*, 1 August 2024; ‘Betrouwbaarheid van het nieuws is cruciaal voor het functioneren van de maatschappij’ (Reliability of news is essential for society to function properly), *AD*, 4 August 2024; ‘Aan storm van desinformatie over steekpartij in Southport ging veel voorwerk vooraf’ (Storm of disinformation on Southport stabbings was preceded by detailed preparations), *NRC*, 5 August 2024.

¹⁵⁰ European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2023 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2022/2075(INI)); Standing Intelligence Agencies Review Committee, ‘Informatiepositie van de inlichtingendiensten wat betreft de financiering door stichtingen of andere organisaties en inzake de invloed die Rusland uitoefent op “politici” in België (No. 2022.297)’ (Information available to the intelligence services regarding financing by foundations or other organisations and regarding influence exerted by Russia on ‘politicians’ in Belgium), 23 December 2022; ‘Zo kan de radicaal-rechtse revolutie (misschien) gestopt worden’, (Here’s how the radical-right revolt can (possibly) be stopped), *NRC*, 26 September 2024; ‘AIVD waarschuwde Baudet voor Russische beïnvloeding’ (AIVD warned Baudet about Russian influencing), *de Volkskrant*, 23 February 2023; ‘Herken de tsaar in Poetin’ (Recognise the Tsar in Putin), *NRC*, 14 January 2017; ‘Roemeense veiligheidsraad: Rusland heeft presidentsverkiezingen beïnvloed’ (Romanian security council: Russia influenced presidential election), *NOS*, 4 December 2024; ‘Gerecht Münster: inlichtingendienst mag AfD in de gaten houden’, (Münster Court: intelligence service may keep AfD under surveillance), *FD*, 13 May 2024.

¹⁵¹ B. Molas et al., ‘Anti-Government Threats and their Transnational Connections’, ICCT March 2024, p. 31.

¹⁵² ‘EU agrees to sanction pro-Russian outlet “Voice of Europe”’, *AFP*, 15 May 2024; ‘Hoe de Russen uw brein proberen te koloniseren’ (How the Russians are trying to colonise your brain), *Trouw*, 15 May 2024; ‘EU legt sancties op aan Voice of Europe en twee mannen achter de website’ (EU imposes sanctions on Voice of Europe and two men behind the website), *NRC*, 27 May 2024.

¹⁵³ ‘Russisch netwerk op X poogde radicaal-rechts in Europa te versterken’ (Russian network on X tried to strengthen radical right in Europe), *de Volkskrant*, 12 July 2024; ‘“Finnen zijn wél doordrongen van gevaren die op ze afkomen”’ (‘Finns are alert to the dangers they face’), *AD*, 19 July 2024.

¹⁵⁴ B. Molas et al., ‘Anti-Government Threats and their Transnational Connections’, ICCT March 2024, pp. 31-32.

¹⁵⁵ K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (Eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), pp. 147-148, 277.

Consequences for Dutch national security

Interactions between Russian actors and anti-institutional and right-wing extremists are less common in the Netherlands than in a number of other Western countries. Nevertheless, anti-institutional and right-wing extremism are transnational phenomena. The influence exerted on those movements as a result of their interaction with state actors could therefore have an impact in the Netherlands, even if such interaction largely occurs beyond its borders. In addition, if the Netherlands' allies fall victim to such activities, this may also indirectly weaken our own position. Furthermore, anti-institutional and right-wing extremist conspiracy theories and disinformation are not constrained by some imaginary border, but instead find their way via the internet and social media to the Netherlands, where they can also cause harm. Part of the threat to the Netherlands posed by state actors and their proxies thus involves fuelling transnational extremist phenomena, thereby impacting the Netherlands (mostly indirectly, for now) from outside its borders.

In the Netherlands, the consequences of the interaction between Russian actors and Western anti-institutional and right-wing extremists mainly concern our country's social and political stability and the democratic legal order.¹⁵⁶ If Russian actors help spread anti-institutional, radical right-wing and right-wing extremist disinformation and conspiracy theories, thereby strengthening extremist elements in our society, this can help promote phenomena such as social unrest, political or social polarisation, rising tensions between various population groups, subversion of democratic and social institutions, and intimidation and threats aimed at people who work for those institutions, such as politicians, judges, scientists and journalists.¹⁵⁷

In addition, interactions between Russian actors and extremist movements can increase the extremist and terrorist threat posed by those movements. This has not yet occurred in the Netherlands, but the Swedish and German-Polish cases described above, which involved various attacks, show that it could. The call for killings and attacks in Ukraine by the leader of The Base is also illustrative in this regard. Although the Kremlin has focused more on radical but non-violent parties on the right side of the political spectrum, it has not shied away from providing support to more extreme elements within the right-wing arena in various countries.¹⁵⁸ The threat may increase, for example, if extremists are offered paramilitary training, or if they receive funding or other resources that can be used to facilitate subversive and/or violent activities. An increased extremist and terrorist threat is more likely in countries where there is more interaction with Russian actors and where extremist movements receive concrete support from Russia. In other countries, such as the Netherlands, by contrast, the risk of an increased threat is relatively limited. Nevertheless, even in those countries, Russia's dissemination of extremist conspiracy theories and disinformation could still help to normalise, legitimise and increase the spread of extremist ideologies, and this too could, in time, increase the extremist and terrorist threat.

¹⁵⁶ National Network of Safety and Security Analysts, 'Leidraad risicobeoordeling Rijksbrede Risicoanalyse Nationale Veiligheid' (Risk Assessment Guide: Government-Wide National Security Risk Assessment, July 2022, pp. 9-11.

¹⁵⁷ NCTV, Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, 17 December 2024, p. 33.

¹⁵⁸ K. Rekawek, T. Renard and B. Molas (eds.), *Russia and the Far-Right, Insights from Ten European Countries* (The Hague 2024), p. 334.

Annexe 1

Overview of terrorist attacks and arrests for planning attacks

Below is an overview of the most significant terrorist attacks and arrests (in connection with planning an attack) in Europe since 11 December 2024. Convictions for such offences are not noted in the list because they relate to past arrests and are therefore not necessarily relevant to the current threat situation. This overview gives a good indication, but the list is not exhaustive. Some arrests are not yet public knowledge and are therefore not mentioned in this DTN. And not all arrests ultimately result in terrorism convictions. In addition, in the case of some attacks or arrests, a terrorist motive emerges only at a later stage in the investigation. The dates and locations of attacks are marked in **red**.

November 2024

- **26 November The Netherlands.** An 18-year-old high-school student from Eindhoven was arrested on suspicion of preparing attacks on targets including the head of Pegida, parliament, police stations, courts and churches. The man is believed to be a supporter of ISIS.

December 2024 (for earlier arrests/attacks in December 2024, see the DTN of December 2024)

- **4 December Italy.** The Italian police arrested 12 individuals who are believed to be part of an organised neo-Nazi group. Some members of the group are suspected of preparing an attack on Prime Minister Meloni, Klaus Schwab (founder of the World Economic Forum) or Italian MPs.
- **15 December North Macedonia.** Four people were arrested on suspicion of preparing an ISIS-inspired attack on civilian targets.
- **19 December United Kingdom.** A man was arrested on suspicion of preparing an attack. He allegedly expressed a desire to harm 'infidels' and Jews. A shopping centre was another possible target. A search of his home found a crossbow, a knife and a recipe for mustard gas.
- **19 December Spain.** Four minors were arrested on suspicion of preparing an attack on a target believed to be the Basílica de Santa María in Alicante. They are thought to be in contact online with jihadists.

- **20 December Germany.** A man drove an SUV into people at a Christmas market, killing six and injuring over 300. The perpetrator's motives were diffuse, a mixture of Islamophobia, xenophobia and anti-institutional beliefs.
- **25 December Germany.** In the vicinity of Berlin the police arrested a minor who is believed to have had plans to carry out an attack on a Berlin church during the Christmas season. He is thought to have been in contact with individuals connected to ISIS. The plans were not in an advanced stage.

January 2025

- **22 January Italy.** A man was arrested on suspicion of being a member of ISIS and preparing a knife attack on the Jewish community in Naples.
- **23 January Belgium.** A minor from Ukraine was arrested on suspicion of planning an attack on a mosque in the Brussels neighbourhood of Molenbeek. A search of his home found two knives, a homemade weapon and documents with Nazi symbols.
- **25 January France.** In a supermarket in Apt a customer and a security guard were injured in a knife attack. During the attack the suspect, a known radical who was subsequently arrested, shouted 'Al-lahu akbar'.
- **25 January Germany.** In Kiel a Kurdish man was stabbed by a Syrian man. The incident took place near a pro-Kurdish demonstration. Bystanders said that the suspect made statements that suggested that he had ISIS sympathies.
- **29 January Sweden.** A man in Sweden who had staged many protests in which he burned the Quran was shot dead in his flat. The murder took place on the eve of his trial for 'incitement against an ethnic group' in connection with Quran-burning protests in 2023. Five people were arrested, but they were released the next day. The Swedish prime minister said that there was a possible link with 'foreign powers'.

February 2025

- **10 February Austria.** A 14-year-old who is believed to be an ISIS sympathiser was arrested on suspicion of preparing an attack on a train station in Vienna.
- **11 February Sweden.** An 18-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of preparing a 'violent Islamic extremist' attack.
- **12 February Germany.** A 21-year-old man from Saxony was arrested for preparing an attack on an asylum seekers' centre in the state of Brandenburg.
- **13 February Germany.** A 24-year-old man drove a car into a demonstration in Munich. A woman and her daughter were killed, and some 36 others were injured. The public prosecutor believes that the perpetrator had an Islamist motive. It is possible that the suspect has psychological problems.
- **15 February Germany.** In Villach a 14-year-old boy was killed and five others were injured in a knife attack. A 23-year-old man was arrested. He may have ties to ISIS and probably radicalised online in a matter of several weeks.
- **17 February United Kingdom.** In Northumberland a 15-year-old boy was arrested for planning an attack and for being a member of The Base.
- **20 February Germany.** An 18-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of preparing an attack with 'Islamist motives' on the Israeli embassy in Berlin.

- **21 February Germany.** In Berlin a 19-year-old man stabbed a tourist at the Holocaust Monument. According to the public prosecutor, the suspect was motivated by ‘radical Islamist and antisemitic convictions’ and was a sympathiser of ISIS.
- **22 February France.** In Mulhouse a 37-year-old man stabbed visitors to a market. One person was killed and five injured. The attack is believed to be terrorist in nature; the suspect was previously convicted of glorifying terrorism after releasing a video in which he called on his viewers to ‘fight infidels’.
- **24 February Switzerland.** A 19-year-old German was arrested for planning an attack on a synagogue in Halle (Germany). He is believed to have shared his attack plan on several occasions in a Telegram group and to have obtained a firearm.

March 2025

- **3 maart Duitsland.** In Mannheim a man drove into a crowd of people. Thus far, the police are sticking to the interpretation that his actions were the result of a psychiatric disorder, but they are still investigating all possibilities, including a right-wing extremist motive.
- **7 maart Nederland.** A 20-year old man was arrested in Apeldoorn on suspicion of participating in a terrorist organisation and preparing a terrorist attack.
- **10 maart Frankrijk.** A 17-year-old was arrested on suspicion of preparing an attack during Ramadan. He is thought to be an ISIS supporter who had become radicalised. Possible targets included Jewish or Christian sites, or the US or Israeli consulates.
- **21 maart Frankrijk.** A man was arrested on suspicion of preparing an attack. He is alleged to have bought a drone and materials for explosives. He had previously been convicted of travelling to Syria for jihadist purposes. He suffers from schizophrenia.

April 2025

- **1 April The Netherlands.** A 25-year-old man with right-wing extremist views was arrested in Nieuwegein on suspicion of terrorist offences.
- **6 April France.** In Paris two men were arrested on suspicion of preparing an attack involving explosives. A third person was arrested for failing to notify the authorities of the plans. At least one of the suspects is believed to have sworn allegiance to ISIS.
- **6 April The Netherlands.** The Public Prosecution Service suspects a man of attempted murder with terrorist intent. He stabbed a Jewish man at the Mesdag secure psychiatric institution in Groningen. On Liberation Day 2018 the same man attacked and seriously injured three people. The man was not sentenced to prison but rather compulsory treatment in a custodial psychiatric facility.
- **9 April Austria.** In Vienna an 18-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of preparing an attack in the name of ISIS on the Israeli embassy and an Islamic centre. The plans were allegedly specific.
- **11 April Greece.** In Athens a bomb exploded at the head office of the Greek railway company. The attack was claimed by a left-wing extremist group.
- **12 April United Kingdom.** At a prison a man who was convicted of involvement in the attack at Manchester Arena in 2017 injured three guards with hot oil and improvised weapons.
- **18 April Italy.** In Italy a Tunisian man was arrested on suspicion of preparing an attack. He was found to be in possession of jihadist propaganda material and documents on making bombs and weapons.
- **24 April France.** At a French school a 15-year-old boy stabbed a fellow pupil to death and wounded three others. Prior to the incident he posted a 13-page manifesto dealing with anti-globalism, anti-

industrialism and ecology, and urging people to rise up. Online he is believed to have followed neo-Nazi groups and expressed his admiration for Hitler.

- **25 April France.** A 21-year-old Frenchman stabbed a Malian man to death at a mosque in the village of La Grand-Combe. The perpetrator filmed his crime and shared the video on social media. In the video the perpetrator was heard shouting insults against Islam, such as 'Fuck your Allah'. The man told the police that he had not acted out of Islamophobia. The French public prosecution service is treating the attack as premeditated murder on the basis of race or religion, i.e. a hate crime rather than terrorism.
- **26 April United Kingdom.** A man attacked two young women with a crossbow on the route of a pub crawl in Leeds. According to the media, the perpetrator posted an announcement on Facebook shortly before the attack, in which he described his actions as 'spree killing, mass murder, terrorism, revenge, misogynistic rage, homicide/suicide'.

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- **20 May Finland.** A 16-year-old boy at a high school in the Finnish town of Pirkkala stabbed three girls with a knife. In a manifesto which he had circulated before the attack, the boy stated his intention to target female students. According to Finnish media the manifesto contained 'detailed grievances'.
- **21 May Germany.** German security services arrested five youths between the ages of 14 and 18 in three federal states on suspicion of being members of a right-wing terrorist organisation. They allegedly wanted to overthrow German democracy by committing acts of violence against migrants and political opponents. One of the suspects was thought to be planning to carry out an arson attack on an asylum seekers' centre.
- **31 May France.** In Puget-sur-Argens a Frenchman with right-wing extremist views shot dead his Tunisian neighbour and injured a Turkish man.

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- **12 June Poland.** A 19-year-old man was arrested, along with two previously arrested men, on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack. They were in possession of heavy-duty fireworks, visited shooting ranges, conducted military-tactical training and collected information on combat operations. They are believed to have been inspired by right-wing terrorist attackers Anders Breivik and Brenton Tarrant.

Annexe 2

DTN Threat levels

The threat level, which is set on the basis of the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN), reflects the general terrorist threat over a longer period of time. In order to determine the threat level, many different factors are taken into account. The nature, origin, specificity, visibility and timeliness of these factors may vary.

Threat levels are indicated on an ascending scale from 1 to 5. The threat levels are used to qualify the scope of the estimated risk that the Netherlands will face a terrorist attack. Fluctuations in the nature, extent and background of the threat therefore do not always immediately warrant raising or lowering the threat level. Furthermore, a concrete threat against a person, object or vital sector in the Netherlands need not lead to a rise in the general threat level, even if systems other than the DTN do raise their levels. The bullet points that appear under the threat levels below are intended to illustrate the kinds of situations that may occur under a given threat level. This also means that not all of the bullets need apply if a particular threat level is in force.

Level 1 out of 5

The terrorist threat to the Netherlands is minimal.

It is unlikely that a terrorist attack will occur in the Netherlands.

- We have no indications that there are individuals in the Netherlands who pose a terrorist threat.
- We have no indications that the Netherlands is a potential target of terrorists abroad.

Level 2 out of 5

The terrorist threat to the Netherlands is limited.

There is a slight chance of a terrorist attack in the Netherlands.

- There is evidence of radicalisation that could eventually pose a threat.
- Terrorists have the intention of carrying out attacks in Europe but have made no specific preparations to that end.

Level 3 out of 5

The terrorist threat to the Netherlands is significant.

A terrorist attack in the Netherlands is conceivable.

- There are individuals and groups in the Netherlands that are becoming highly radicalised and pose a threat.
- We have no indications that terrorists are preparing an attack in the Netherlands, though it is conceivable.
- Terrorists are carrying out or plotting attacks in Europe.

Level 4 out of 5

The terrorist threat to the Netherlands is substantial.

There is a real chance of a terrorist attack in the Netherlands.

- Terrorists see the Netherlands as a target.
- Terrorists are carrying out attacks in surrounding countries.
- We have possible indications that terrorists are preparing an attack on the Netherlands.

Level 5 out of 5

The terrorist threat to the Netherlands is critical.

A terrorist attack in the Netherlands is imminent.

- We have specific indications that terrorists are about to carry out an attack in the Netherlands.
- An attack has taken place in the Netherlands.
- There is a chance of a follow-up attack in the Netherlands.

Remarks on Level 5

- *The level can be raised to 5 for just one specific part of the country.*
- *Level 5 will be maintained for a limited time only.*

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