

Right-Wing Extremism - Indoctrination, Radicalization and Acts of Terror

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Introduction

Of late, extreme right-wing terrorism has become alarmingly a matter of grave concern in several states, primarily the western nations. The United States, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Bulgaria, Poland in the Western hemisphere and Australia and New Zealand in the Southern hemisphere have witnessed the growing threat of right-wing extremists' violence coupled with propaganda to propagate and establish their beliefs. The rising numbers of violent acts by right-wing extremists are creeping into the mainstream of terrorism. Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, white-racism and anti-immigrant sentiments are on the rise and make a heady and toxic cocktail with hatred, extremism, and misogyny being the volatile ingredients. Often, extremists engaged in extreme right-wing terrorist plots have no prior contacts to the radical setting or any linkages with the terrorists' or extremists' environment. This form is also sometimes called 'Hive Terrorism'. The ideology of right-wing extremists can influence the vulnerable and impressionable minds having an inclination towards this kind of philosophy. Thus, the growth of linkages of right-wing extremists and mushrooming of their philosophy will be hard to be denied.

Right-wing extremism/terrorism is the last decade phenomenon and still amorphous in its objectives and unstructured in its modus operandi, hence, it has been neglected in the general academic studies of terrorism. A recent report published by the UN's Security Counterterrorism Committee (CTED) in July 2020 identified the far-right movement as a concerning global threat.¹ Most of the studies related to terrorism have been focused on ISIL, Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Hezbollah, Boko Haram, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other prominent terrorists' outfits, but, at present, the spectrum of terrorism has within its fold this new form, 'right-wing terrorism' and it has to be taken seriously into account for the wide net that it is crossing the frontiers and continents.

The Southern Poverty Law Centre's 2019 reported that year's incidents of racially and ethnically motivated terrorism has been elevated by the far-right extremist terror which has resulted to a "national threat priority", declaring the virulent ideology of far-right white

¹ Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), (2020), *"Member States concerned by the growing and increasingly transnational threat of extreme Right-wing terrorism"*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/news/2020/07/06/cted-publishes-updated-trends-alert-response-extreme-Right-wing-terrorist-groups-covid-19/>

supremacism as a “serious threat to national security and pluralistic democracy”.² Lone-wolf far-right terrorists have turned to copycat terrorism as their main tactic, generating a loop of violence fuelled by internet forums.

The security and safety in everyday lives have become more critical than before due to terrorism threat emanating from different organizations, ideologies and motives. While most people became acquainted with terrorism after the attacks on the United States soil on the World Trade Centre in 2001, though terror threat per se was present in people's lives decades before 9/11. However, without a doubt, it is right to assume that the strikes on twin towers sent the shock waves all over the world unleashing 'Global War on Terror' to counter the all-encompassing threats from terrorism. Terrorism or violence in any form disturbs the global peace and security. The inability to prevent the 9/11 attacks has famously been blamed in part on a failure to imagine such an attack from occurring.³ It sensitized the people about the violence and hate associated with terrorism; warned the state governments that this is not a lone battle of nations and shaped the world's view to take the threat as a grim reality and deal upfront with the challenges of terror. Today, terror has taken a variety of forms exploiting the niche technologies primarily of the cyberspace to adapt to the world that it plans to terrorize.

To combat the right-wing extremists effectively, the national governments and international organizations have adopted various theories and methods. Most of the research on terrorism is focused on Al-Qaeda, Jihadist Terrorism, Taliban, Hezbollah or the geographical region where these organizations operate and enforce their violent methods to spread terror and panic. Studies carried out by countries and scholars indicate an integrated hybrid approach to finding a solution for right-wing extremist violence under the broader subject of terrorism. There are certain challenges in researching right-wing terrorism primarily attributed to the paucity of primary sources, thus restricting the objectivity, and the researcher has to depend on secondary sources. Also, the consistency of research on right-wing terrorism has been less.

Background

Fascism falls within the far right, but the far-right also extends to so-called ‘radical-right populism’. The traditional Fascist and Nazi regimes from 1922-1945 were comprised of movements that derived their identity from essentially being “anti-movements”: anti-liberalist, anti-democratic, anti-communist, anti-capitalist, and anti-bourgeois. The modern radical right remains anti-bourgeois, but particularly against people belonging to different racial and ethnic origins, immigrants, homosexuals, Muslims and others. The renewal of the political parties and organizations centered on radical nationalism and extremism that marked the interwar era among Fascists and Nazis has led to an extremely high degree of attention and reaction across Europe, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. It is not a coherent or easily defined movement, but rather a shifting, complex and overlapping milieu of individuals, groups and movements (online and offline) espousing different but related ideologies. This has led to numerous extensive terrorist attacks targeting minorities, as carried out in Christchurch, New Zealand (March 2019), El Paso, United States (August 2019), and Halle (October 2019) and Hanau (February 2020) in Germany and Oslo (July 2011) Norway.

Extreme terrorism and right-wing groups have since the last two decades have continued to use various strategies to raise and broaden their communications to reach people to recruit, indoctrinate, and radicalize them. The source of communication by the right-wing terrorists is

² The Southern Poverty Law Center, "The Year In Hate And Extremism 2019", retrieved from: https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/yih_2020_final.pdf

³ Schuurman, B., 2019. Topics in terrorism research: reviewing trends and gaps, 2007-2016. *Critical studies on terrorism*, 12(3), pp.463–480.

through social media to target new audiences outside the movement exploiting the appeal of counterculture pushback. The driving factor of extreme terrorism and right-wing groups is through the concept of hate crimes. Hate crime is defined as “a criminal act that is motivated by a bias toward the victim or victims’ real or perceived identity group.” Far-right terrorists are firmly disposed to change the current system, and they advocate for the creation of the authoritarian order typically white, heterosexual and Christian.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in its resolution 1624 (2005) calls upon states to, “continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, in an effort to prevent the indiscriminate targeting of different religions and cultures, and to take all measures as may be necessary and appropriate and in accordance with their obligations under international law to counter incitement of terrorist acts motivated by extremism and intolerance [...]”⁴ Discrimination should be abolished entirely and, peace should be restored between states, and between people of different ethnic backgrounds, races, or cultures. The UNSC has consistently condemned terrorism in all its ways and dimensions, emphasizing that it cannot, or should not, identify with any faith, ethnicity or civilization terrorism and violence extremism that contributes to terrorism. In 2019, the United Nations Secretary-General unveiled the United Nations Policy and Plan of Action on Hate speech, in reaction to the rise in xenophobia, racism, intolerance, militant sexism, anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred around the world.

Elisabeth Carter work on “*Right-Wing extremism / radicalization: reconstructing the concept*” deals with the lack of generally accepted definition on the right-wing extremism/radicalization concept. Hence, the article sheds light on the concept and why there is no common consensus among scholars and intelligence officials regarding the definitional factor of right-wing extremism. The article reconstructs the concept of right-wing extremism/radicalism following Sartori’s advice to ‘first collect a representative set of definitions; second extract their characteristics; and third, construct matrixes that organize such characteristics meaningfully’.⁵

In an analysis by **Mudde** in 1995, he picked 26 concepts and examples of right-wing extremism from a survey of the scholarly literature and assembled a database of all its characteristics. He concluded that 58 qualities have been identified and that over half of the meanings and explanations contain mainly five characteristics - nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy and the strong state.⁶

Different types of extremism are in existence, such as skin heads, the anti-authority, white supremacists, lone actors, the anti-Muslims, ideologists and gurus. A new term has been coined, ‘Manosphere’, that is an assortment of websites, blogs and online forums, promotes masculinity and hostility towards women overtly. The current literature on right-wing / radicalism has a common understanding that it revolves on one ideology, which is right-wing. Though, it is difficult to explain the ideology and as **Eatwell** and **Ignazi** amongst others have illustrated, a number of different styles of thought characterize the right, making it very hard to identify any common core.⁷ The right is more unequal: it considers certain inequality to be

⁴ www.icc-cpi.int. (n.d.). *Al Bashir case: ICC Appeals Chamber invites observations from International Organisations, States Parties and Professors of International Law on legal matters raised by Jordan*. [online] Available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1375> [Accessed 27 Dec. 2020].

⁵ G. Sartori, ‘Guidelines for concept analysis’, in G. Sartori (Ed.) *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis* (Beverly Hills CA: Sage, 1984), p. 41.

⁶ Mudde, ‘Right-wing extremism analyzed’, *op.cit.*, Ref.4; R. Eatwell, ‘The rebirth of the “extreme right” in Western Europe’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 53(3) (2000), pp. 407–425

⁷ R. Eatwell, ‘The nature of the Right, 2: the Right as a variety of “styles of thought”’, in Eatwell and O’Sullivan (Eds), *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, pp. 62–76; P. Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

normal and thus cannot be eradicated and deems it not the duty of the State to minimise social inequalities.

The global far-right terrorist movement has embraced martyrdom as a tactic to inspire supporters to carry out lone wolf assaults. The right-wing extremism is being felt by ilk of Anders Breivik, Robert Bowers and Brenton Tarrant, which reveals their iconography and imagery that their portrayal was meant to motivate lone wolves to commit attacks. North America, Western Europe and Oceania have been targeted by far-right attackers.

*Observers state that far-right domestic terrorism has not been treated seriously enough in the West and that security and intelligence services should pay closer attention to this emerging threat.*⁸

Conclusion

Terrorism has become an intricate web of violence, terror, propaganda, ulterior motives, religious fanaticism, class & race superiority and a business to many since 9/11. There are innumerable linkages crossing the borders that no one nation alone can effectively tackle terrorism with all the resources at its disposal, no matter how much a country is advanced.

Right-wing extremism is the latest form to come within the folds of terrorism, though deceptively it is bordering on the thin line between extremism and hard-core terrorism. The twenty-first century's modern radical right is far from a unified movement with a single established ideology or strategy. Like their Jihadist counterparts, extremist far-right groups aim to challenge the current social system and try to recreate it with a system of their creation and carving. Hence, nations have to accept this as a real terror threat and synergize their efforts to stymie its tentacles to spread and for that, policies have to be devised at the highest international forums. Nations have to come to a consensus on how to deal with this threat and assist each other in neutralizing the extremists and eradicating the causes for people to become hard liners followed by becoming right wing extremists and terrorists.

Terrorism is a threat faced by all the humanity and it is not diminishing anytime soon. It becomes important for all the counter-terrorism organizations to detect, deter and defeat terrorism. Migrants, refugees and members of religious and ethnic minorities are often the targets of extreme right-wing terrorism and face serious human rights violations as a result. The right-wing violence in many western countries has been analyzed under the heading of hate crimes, which in turn have a variety of characteristics of terrorism. The umbrella term 'right-wing terrorism' holds many branches of ideologies such as anti-Semitism, xenophobia, islamophobia, hate crimes, lone wolf acts, nationalism sentiments, white-supremacy, neo-Nazi, patriot movements, promotion of liberty, spiritual movements, transnational movements, vigilantism groups and militias, which makes it abstract and external in nature. This entire intricate web is to be fully understood and viable solutions found to eradicate it. Civil societies and NGOs should collaborate with citizens trying to exit far-right extremist organisations in order to facilitate disengagement and continuation.

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⁸ Institute for Economics and Peace (2019), "Far-right attacks in the West surge by 320 per cent", Vision of Humanity, <http://visionofhumanity.org/global-terrorism-index/far-right-attacks-in-the-west-surge-by-320-per-cent/>

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